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SCIENCE FICTION AND FANTASY

March
1995

Brian Aldiss

'Becoming the Full Butterfly'

David Garnett
new story
& interview

Plus fiction by
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THANKS VERY MUCH to the people who kindly supplied me with two "Hollywood novels" I was searching for; but I'm still in need of reading copies of the following: Jane Allen, *I Lost My Girlish Laughter* (1938); Jeffrey Dell, *Nobody Ordered Wolves* (1939); Josh Greenfeld, *The Return of Mr Hollywood* (1984); James Hilton, *Morning Journey* (1951); Frederic Raphael, *California Time* (1975); Melville Shavelson, *Lualda* (1975); Thomas Wiseman, *Czar* (1965); Bernard Wolfe, *Come On Out, Daddy* (1963); Rudolph Wurlitzer, *Slow Fade* (1984). Paperbacks preferred (if such exist). If you can supply any please contact David Pringle, *Interzone*, 217 Preston Drive Brighton BN1 6FL (0273-504710; e-mail: interzone@cix.compulink.co.uk).

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COMING NEXT MONTH

Charles Platt joins us as guest editor! He has gathered a fine crop of new stories by Piers Anthony, Gregory Benford, Michael Blumlein, Kathleen Ann Goonan, Richard Kadrey, Rudy Rucker and others, making this very nearly an all-fiction, all-American, all-star issue (entirely designed and typeset by Charles, as well). So look out for something special in the shape of the April *Interzone*, on sale in March.

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SCIENCE FICTION AND FANTASY

No 93

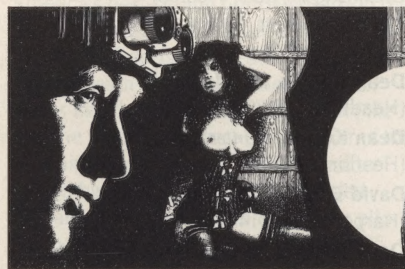
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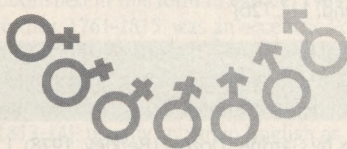
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Interface

"Genres come and go," says Alex Hamilton in his introduction to the latest of his annual listings of UK paperback fast-sellers (*The Guardian*, 10th January 1995). "Fantasy is up, sf is down (but anticipating a surge); the nursing romance is in narcosis, the western has ridden off into the sunset. For the bodice-ripper, it's all passion spent... The lights are going down on glitz, and people look askance at sex-and-shopping."

A nice little summary, which serves to remind us that other genres have their waxings and wanings too. But despite the good news that science fiction is "anticipating a surge" (where on earth did Hamilton get that tip from?), his roll-call of 1994's top hundred fast-sellers in paperback is even more depressing than usual for the sf reader to contemplate. Not one sf title makes its way onto the list, unless you count number 39, which is *The Children of Men* by P. D. James (Penguin; 220,674 sales); but this author has specifically denied that her book is science fiction — so it can't be, can it?

Verging on sf, there's also number 82, *Mary Shelley's Frankenstein* (Pan; 118,464 sales), which Hamilton attributes to Shelley but which in fact is probably the movie novelization of that title by Leonore Fleischer (queen of the novelizers). But at number 14

last year's Michael Crichton book, *Disclosure* (Arrow; 406,318 sales), is a sexual-harassment thriller rather than a dinosaur adventure or any other kind of sf; much the same is true of the rather good Iain Banks title at number 61, *Complicity* (Abacus; 139,165 sales).

Of course, there are horror and fantasy authors aplenty to be found among these 100,00-plus sellers, but nobody who can be claimed as an sf writer *pur* (Isaac Asimov is no longer with us, and in any case his last novel, *Forward the Foundation*, does not feature on the list; and nor does anything by Arthur C. Clarke). Here are the horror and fantasy books which make the cut:

- 13: **Stephen King**, *Nightmares and Dreamscapes* (NEL; 436,006)
- 28: **Terry Pratchett**, *Men at Arms* (Corgi; 272,853)
- 33: **Dean Koontz**, *Mr Murder* (Headline; 239,893)
- 47: **Dean Koontz**, *Winter Moon* (Headline; 175,853)
- 54: **David Eddings**, *The Shining Ones* (HarperCollins, 149,806)
- 59: **Dean Koontz**, *House of Thunder* (Headline; 141,059)
- 60: **Terry Pratchett**, *Johnny and the Dead* (Corgi; 139,609)
- 89: **Tad Williams**, *Siege* (Legend; 111,923)
- 91: **Terry Brooks**, *Talismans of Shannara* (Legend; 111,726)

While it's pleasing to see some of these authors do well, particularly Pratchett and Tad Williams (who, so far as I know, is a newcomer to the UK top hundred this year), it's saddening to discover that no sf author can match them in the public taste — and, indeed, that most of our homegrown fantasy and horror writers (Moorcock, Holdstock, Ramsey Campbell, Kim Newman, David Gemmell, etc, etc) also fail to make it very near the top.

Perhaps Alex Hamilton knows something we don't know, however, and (let's fantasize) just maybe he's right when he says that science fiction is "anticipating a surge." The fortunes of genres do wax and wane, the tastes of the public can change. Fantasy and horror have had a good long run for their money, but perhaps they'll begin to seem less relevant, less fitting to the mood of the times, as the millennium draws nearer. Maybe, in the next five years, we'll see such names as Paul J. McAuley, Gwyneth Jones, Colin Greenland, Stephen Baxter and Greg Egan appearing on Hamilton's fastseller lists. Miracles may happen. And, who knows, if Stanley Kubrick's much-rumoured mega-budget new sf blockbuster movie ever does get released, then Ian Watson's as-yet unwritten novelization may soar to number one.

David Pringle

Interaction

Dear Editors:

I notice that in issue 91 ("Interaction," page six) you ask for a Top Ten sf novel list. So here goes, in no particular order:-

Ice! by Arnold Federbush (Bantam, 1978). The only novel I can recall where the protagonist actually chooses wrong when the next ice age dawns. He doesn't follow his Eskimo girlfriend on the logical trip, but sets out on a wild goose chase to South America.

Ivory by Mike Resnick (Tor, 1988). I could probably fill this top ten with ten Resnick novels, so I've just picked the best one so far. This was the second Resnick I read (after *Paradise*), and it should be known by everyone.

Walkabout Woman by Michaela Roessner (Bantam, 1988). The only fantasy novel on my list, and bound to stay so for a long time. It's set in Australia among the Aborigines and is embedded in their religion and myths. That made it strange enough for me to buy and read. Much more enjoyable than other fantasy.

Still Forms on Foxfield by Joan Slonczewski (Ballantine, 1980). I read this some time ago, and still think it's one of the better novels about aliens-versus-humans — without the usual tired old clichés.

Strangers by Gardner Dozois (Berkley, 1978). I waited over three years to buy this (I couldn't find it) and it was worth the wait. For once, humans don't own the galaxy, don't make things happen and don't understand all at a mere glance. And it's a very good story. Why doesn't he write more?

The Movement of Mountains by Michael Blumlein (Simon & Schuster, 1987). A strange story about a doctor getting involved with genetically engineered people on another planet. The attraction is partly the Domers, but also Blumlein's way of story-telling.

Deep, Very Deep Space by Joseph Nathenson (Manor Books, 1978). I picked it up for its title, since I had never heard of the author (I still know nothing about him). It's about a generation ship trying to cross the Great Gulf. Don't ask me why, but I liked it enormously right from the beginning.

The Night of Kadar by Garry Kilworth (Faber, 1978). One of the first books I ever bought and read in English, and images from it still visit me sometimes. Why did Kilworth have to start writing fantasy? God's ways are indecipherable... (or something like that, I guess).

Out of the Silence by Erle Cox (Robertson & Mullens, revised edition, 1947). An Australian book, about the discovery of a large tomb under the Outback, containing several wonders and a beautiful (if fascist) girl. The

opening and early exploration of the tomb is among the most compelling pieces of fiction I ever read.

The Hampdenshire Wonder by J. D. Beresford (Sidgwick & Jackson, 1911). A slow-moving but gratifying tale of a young (mental) superman, his short life and mysterious murder. Sadly, this book has rarely been reissued. Let's hope it appears again, because it is a wonderful book and one to be widely read.

Peter Timmermans
Reuver, Netherlands

Editor: Thanks for an interesting list. Concerning some of your more obscure authors: Arnold Federbush (born 1935) and Joseph Nathenson (birth date unknown) are both listed in Robert Reginald's massive bibliography *Science Fiction and Fantasy Literature, 1975-1991*, but neither seems to have written any other sf/fantasy books apart from the titles you name. J. D. Beresford (1873-1947) was the father of novelist Elisabeth Beresford (of "Wombles" fame); he wrote quite a number of other sf books (see Brian Stableford's *Scientific Romance in Britain for more details*). The Australian Erle Cox (1873-1950) wrote his *Out of the Silence* circa 1919, when it was first published as a newspaper serial; besides that book, he produced a couple of other fantastic novels, *Fool's Harvest* (1939) and *The Missing Angel* (1947).

Dear Editors:

Science-fiction books I can read again and again and... "bugger off – can't you see I'm reading?"

It should be a truth universally acknowledged that when someone nominates the "best" of anything he/she really means his/her favourite of anything. Therefore, objectivity was the furthest thing from my mind while drawing up this alphabetical top-20 list:

The Primal Urge by Brian Aldiss (1961)

Guardians of Time by Poul Anderson (1960)

I, Robot by Isaac Asimov (1950)

The Crystal World by J. G. Ballard (1966)

The Demolished Man by Alfred Bester (1953)

Fahrenheit 451 by Ray Bradbury (1953)

Tales from the White Hart by Arthur C. Clarke (1957)

Martian Time-Slip by Philip K. Dick (1964)

Orphans of the Sky by Robert A. Heinlein (1963)

Pilgrimage: The Book of the People by Zenna Henderson (1961)

Gather, Darkness! by Fritz Leiber (1950)

A Canticle for Leibowitz by Walter M. Miller, Jr. (1960)

Other Days, Other Eyes by Bob Shaw (1972)

City by Clifford D. Simak (1952)

The Dragon Masters by Jack Vance (1963)

The War Against the Rull by A. E. van Vogt (1959)

The Watch Below by James White (1966)

Darker Than You Think by Jack Williamson (1948)

The Chrysalids by John Wyndham (1955)

The Dream Master by Roger Zelazny (1966)

Graham Andrews

Rhode-Saint-Genese, Belgium

Editor: It's a very "trad" (and, some would say, "safe") list of titles which you provide, Graham, with a slight Northern Irish bias — though you've chosen unexpectedly minor books by Aldiss, Clarke and van Vogt. Nevertheless, there's lots of good stuff there, even though you haven't listed anything at all recent. A small point relating to one of your more obscure books, Zenna Henderson's *Pilgrimage*: did you know that quite a good TV-movie version of this was made in 1971? It's not mentioned in either Clute and Nicholls's *Encyclopedia of Science Fiction* (Orbit, 1993) or Roger Fulton's *Encyclopedia of Television Science Fiction* (Boxtree, 1990), but it exists. According to Halliwell's *Television Companion* (1986), the film is called *The People*, it's 74 minutes long, directed by John Korty, stars Kim Darby, Dan O'Herlihy and some geezer called William Shatner, and is described as "quiet, understated science fiction with plenty of

charm." Has anyone seen it? It strikes me that TV sf is still an under-explored topic, especially in the areas of one-off productions, TV movies and serials (as opposed to long-running series, which tend to be the things everyone remembers).

Dear Editors:

I see that, as a result of Julian Remnant's letter in IZ 91, you are repeating your request for long-time sf readers to contribute their Top Ten titles. A few mental calculations revealed that I have been reading sf for at least 35 years now, a figure which surely qualifies me as a long-time reader (at this rate it will not be long before I qualify as an old git!). I suspect that "Top Ten" is usually assumed to mean top-ten novels, but, glancing through my collection, I was struck by the fact that many of my favourite volumes were not novels but single-author short-story collections. The order of my top ten listed below is not based on preference but on the median age of the stories in each collection:

The Best of C. L. Moore (1975). She was a fine writer from an early stage in the development of genre sf. The first and earliest story in this collection is the famous "Shambléau," from 1933, while the latest is the classic "Vintage Season," from 1946. The latter is a brilliant story which would not be out of place in a current issue of IZ.

In Deep by Damon Knight (1963). These neat, well-crafted stories (all written in the 1950s) formed the basis of a sort of sf cult in my class at school. Now, more than 30 years later, I can still vividly recall the impact of stories like "Stranger Station," "Ticket to Anywhere" and "Beachcomber."

Green Magic by Jack Vance (1979). Vance is my favourite sf and fantasy writer. This collection is billed as fantasy, but stories such as "The Miracle Workers," "The Moon Moth" and "The Men Return" are sf. This book contains some of Vance's best short fiction and is representative of his work.

The Caltraps of Time by David I. Masson (1968). Masson wrote these brilliant stories for Moorcock's *New Worlds* in the 60s. Many are about the nature of perception and linguistics. My favourite is "A Two-Timer," a comic account by a 17th-century gentleman of his projection forward in time to the present.

Neutron Star by Larry Niven (1968). Some of Niven's exuberant "Known Space" stories, combining the pace and colour (and, let's face it, occasional crudeness) of space opera with the trappings of hard sf. There's a real sense of cosmic distances here. My favourite is "At the Core," in which the hero is blackmailed into piloting an experimental alien spacecraft to the galactic core.

The Wind's Twelve Quarters by Ursula Le Guin (1975). Stories from her first ten years as a published writer. A number in this diverse and readable collection are "prototypes" of some of her famous novels, e.g. "Semley's

Necklace" (*Rocannon's World*), "The Word of Unbinding" (*The Earthsea Trilogy*), "Winter's King" (*The Left Hand of Darkness*).

The Knights of the Limits by Barrington Bayley (1978). Another *New Worlds* stalwart and now, of course, an *Interzone* contributor. Bayley's work is almost inexpressibly weird — the closest I can get is metaphysical pulp sf.

The Persistence of Vision by John Varley (1978). Varley was hailed as one of the most exciting new writers of the 70s. "In the Hall of the Martian Kings" features a wonderfully strange Martian ecology and stands up well in comparison with the recent rash of Mars stories.

Crystal Express by Bruce Sterling (1989). His early Mechanist/Shaper stories, along with other sf and fantasy. A favourite is "The Swarm"; this was the first Sterling I ever read, back in 1982, and it's an alien hive-mind story (which I have a weakness for).

Tangents by Greg Bear (1989). By an odd coincidence, I read Rudy Rucker's *The Fourth Dimension* and Andrew Hodge's biography of Alan Turing, *The Enigma of Intelligence*, a few months before this collection. As a result I was positively awestruck by the title story — a perfect example of where sf writers get their ideas from, and of how the best writers can transform those ideas into original works of art.

Single-author collections are surprisingly common in sf: you reviewed six in a recent issue of IZ. They are also oddly invisible; there is no discrete entry in Clute and Nicholls's *Encyclopedia*, for instance. Nevertheless, they provide showcases for an author's work, and also tend to contain more variety and changes of mood and pace, etc., than the average novel (most of which are far too long nowadays, anyway). I would advise the new reader of sf to seek out single-author collections — at least he/she will get a good introduction to what is still an important sf medium, the short story.

Dave Bishop
Manchester

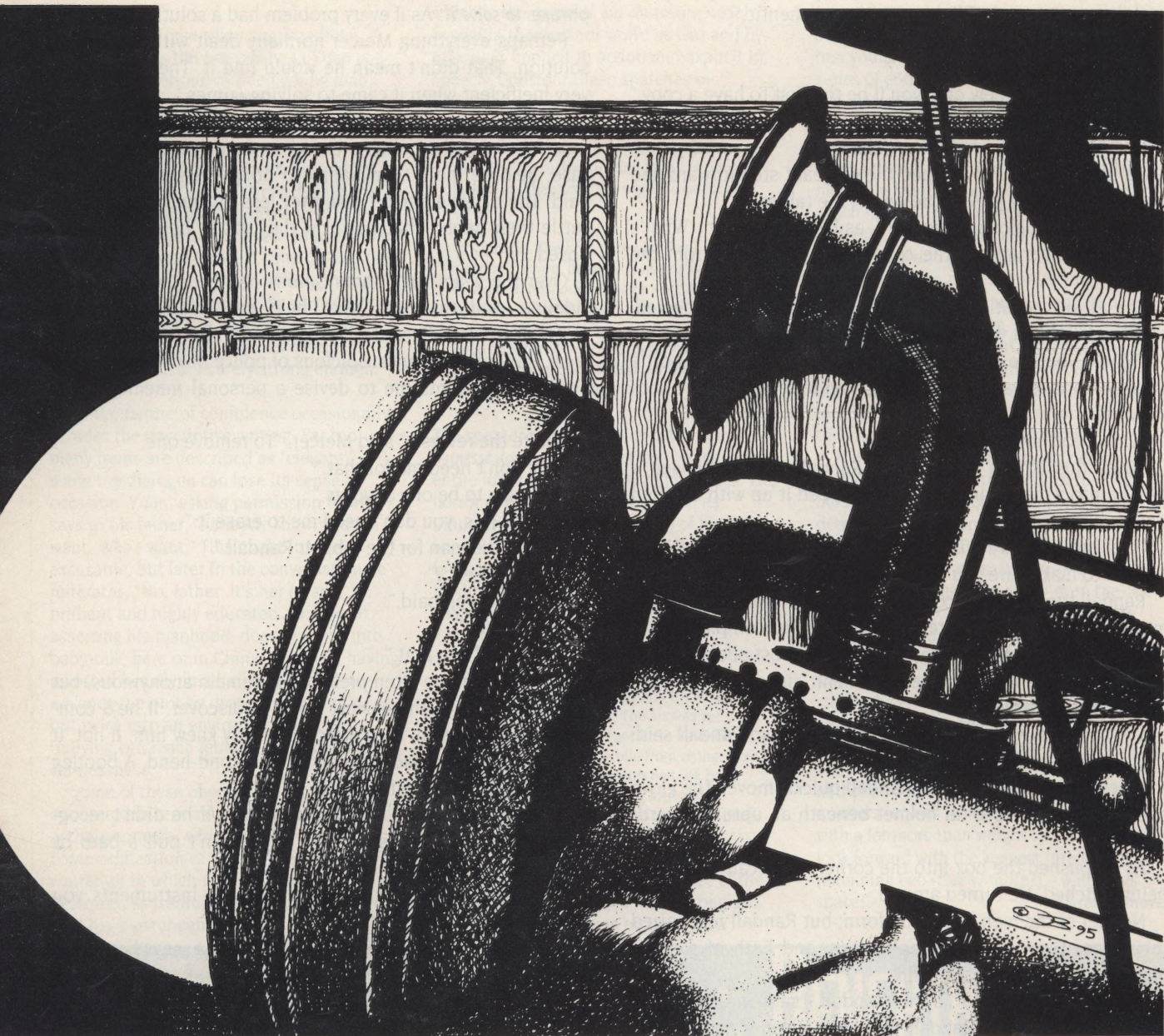
Editor: Well said. Talking of "sf cults" among schoolboys in the 1960s, the author I remember being much appreciated under the desk-lid, by three or four of us at any rate, was Theodore Sturgeon — books such as *Not Without Sorcery* and *E Pluribus Unicorn*. (See Brian Stableford's essay in this issue for more about Sturgeon.) Another American, Clifford D. Simak, was also a particular favourite. Then, of course, I and some of my friends discovered the collections of Brian Aldiss and J. G. Ballard... and the rest is history — that's why this magazine exists! By the way, you don't have to be a long-time reader, or old fart (to use a Vonnegutism), in order to send us a Top Ten list — in fact, it would be particularly interesting to see lists of favourites from younger people who have been reading sf for, say, just five years or less.



BRUTE

Skill

David
Garnett



Illustrations by Jim Burns

Princess Theresa was undressing for him when the police officer walked in.

Randall realized they were no longer alone when she suddenly looked up and stopped unfastening her stays. He immediately dulled the dreamscape crystal, removed his oculars and glanced around.

Sergeant Irwin gazed at the half-clad woman who stood within the cut-out shape of a giant keyhole. She put her hands on her hips and glared at him, making no attempt to cover herself.

"How did you get in?" said Randall.

"I let myself in, sir," said the sergeant. "I know it's your butler's afternoon off, and I didn't want to disturb your —" He smiled for a moment. "— work."

"That's all for now, Gloria," Randall told his model.

She picked up her discarded clothes and walked towards the door. Sergeant Irwin held it open, giving her a brief salute.

"She looks familiar, sir," he said, once she'd gone.

For a moment, Randall thought the sergeant knew exactly what had been happening in the studio and that was why he was here: he wanted payment for his silence. What was the

going rate to overlook a treason charge?

"She's a music hall artiste," Randall told him.

"Yes, I remember now. She sings and dances, doesn't she?"

Randall nodded, but he hadn't hired Gloria for those talents. She was here because her shape was very similar to that of the princess. He could have produced a complete image, but it was much easier to start with an existing body, then add the royal features.

In any case, Randall could never have matched Gloria's artistic disrobement. They had spent most of the afternoon going through the boudoir scene, covering it from every angle.

Gloria had no idea of the role she was playing, of course, and would have been appalled at the idea. She thought she was earning a few guineas simply to undress and bathe, not to act as the nude body of the heir to the throne's new bride.

Randall turned up the gas mantle, and the room became brighter. Irwin glanced around, inspecting the cluttered contents: the compressor, the hydraulic pumps, the magneto, the coils of copper piping, the galvanometers, the electrolytic batteries, the webs of wires, the valves, the vacuum tubes. He

nodded to himself as though he recognized it all and that everything was in order.

"I do enjoy your prizefights, sir. Very authentic."

"I'm glad to hear it, sergeant."

"You don't happen to have...?"

"When there's a new one, you'll be the first to have a copy," said Randall. "As usual."

"Thank you, sir. Ah-ha! What's this?"

Randall froze as he watched the sergeant step forward and pick up the boxing glove from one of the tables.

"Odd looking glove," Irwin said, as he inspected it. "What's this?" He stretched out the coil of wire which ran from the cuff.

The glove was still a prototype, and it wasn't connected, but Randall didn't want anyone to see it.

"Would you like a drink, sergeant?" he said, lifting a bottle of scotch in one hand, and leaning over to take the glove with the other.

"Thank you, sir, but I'm on duty."

"Then this isn't a social call?" Randall poured himself a whisky into a measuring glass, and topped it up with distilled water.

"I've brought two visitors to speak with you, sir. They wanted to make sure you were alone."

Randall took a sip of scotch. Most people would have made an appointment, but there was no point in complaining. If Irwin had brought them here, they weren't most people.

"Shall I bring them to the basement, sir, or will you see them in the drawing room?"

They must have come because of his work, so Randall said: "Show them down here, sergeant."

When Irwin left the studio, Randall quickly moved the glove and hid the experimental helmet beneath an upturned cardboard box.

As he pushed the box into the corner, he became aware of being watched. He turned around.

Neither of the men wore a uniform, but Randall recognized their type. They were both policemen, and both of a much higher rank than Sergeant Irwin.

"Good of you to see us, Mr Randall," said the first man, making it seem as if Randall had been given a choice. "My name's Mercer. I'm from Scotland Yard."

"What can I do for you?" asked Randall, as he watched the second man examine the enamel hip-bath in which Gloria should have been washing herself at this very moment.

After a few seconds, the man walked towards one of the chairs, took out his handkerchief, wiped the seat, and sat down. He folded his arms and looked through the huge key-hole. It was as if he were part of an audience and waiting for something to happen on stage.

Was that why they were here? Did they know what Randall had been doing? He took another mouthful of whisky.

"My colleague is from across the Atlantic," said Mercer, as if that explained everything. "We're here to ask for your professional assistance, Mr Randall."

"Always happy to help the police," said Randall.

That wasn't true, of course. But it was never a good idea to tell the police the truth, partly because they wouldn't believe it. They expected to be told lies. Randall had helped them in the past, but he'd never been paid. The police seemed to think it was his "civic duty" to provide expert knowledge free of charge.

"A certain important gentleman has a problem," said Mer-

cer, "and we believe you're the best person to solve it."

"I see," said Randall, as he thought of Mercer's turn of phrase: *to solve it*. As if every problem had a solution.

Perhaps everything Mercer normally dealt with did have a solution. That didn't mean he would find it. The police were very inefficient when it came to solving crimes.

Randall looked at the second man again. Was this why they were here? Another assignment for some rich bastard? In that case, he'd be more than happy to oblige. Assuming he was paid. The richer a person was, they less inclined they were to settle their debts. That was how they got to be rich, he supposed.

Over the years such commissions had become a lucrative sideline, and that was what he'd been doing when the sergeant arrived. Because it was rare for these to be wholly legal, Randall was very suspicious of police involvement.

"Someone wants me to devise a personal mnemograph?" he said.

"Quite the reverse," said Mercer. "To remove one."

"You don't need me for that."

"It seems to be one of yours."

"Even if it is, you don't need me to erase it."

"You're the man for the job, Mr Randall."

"And my fee...?"

"You'll be well paid."

"Who is he?"

"I can't tell you that."

Randall's clients often preferred to remain anonymous, but their identity was the easiest thing to discover. If he'd commissioned the gram, then Randall already knew him. If not, it was someone who had used his work second-hand. A bootleg copy, or a generalized template.

"I have to see him," said Randall. Even if he didn't recognize the subject, he'd soon find out. "I can't pull a barb by autowriter."

"I know," said Mercer. "Collect whatever instruments you need, then we'll go."

Randall shook his head. "I'm not going anywhere." He drained his whisky.

"I don't think you understand, Mr Randall."

"You're the one who doesn't understand. If there's someone who wants to see me, he has to come here." He gestured around the room. "All my apparatus is here. Look how much there is. Some of it's very delicate. I can't go carting it all over London." He glanced at the second man, who still hadn't spoken. "Or across the Atlantic."

Several clients had made it worth Randall's while to take his equipment to them, and he always enjoyed working away from his subterranean studio. But he had no intention of going anywhere this time, even though finding and removing a mental trace which had lodged inside the forebrain was relatively simple. Destruction was always easier than creation.

Mercer walked over to the other man, and they conferred in whispers.

"We'll return later tonight," said Mercer, as he opened the door. "Be ready for us."

"I'll be here," said Randall.

Randall waited until he heard the front door slam shut, then went to check they'd left.

"Gloria!" he called.

"Sir?" she said, stepping out of the lounge. She was still in her underclothes. "Shall we go back downstairs?"

Randall shook his head. His artistic inspiration had

deserted him. "Upstairs?" he suggested.

Gloria smiled. "Whatever you like, sir," she said. "But there'll be an extra charge, of course."

"Of course."

Randall woke up suddenly. It was still dark, and he wondered why he was awake so early. There was a noise in the street below. The hiss of escaping steam from the car which had woken him. He closed his eyes, but he could hear voices. They seemed to be from downstairs.

What was going on? What time was it?

He sat up, reaching for the lamp by the side of the bed. As the light flared, he remembered. He glanced at his pocket watch. It was an hour before midnight, and what he'd heard must have been the arrival of his subject.

Gloria had left earlier, and now Randall got out of bed and began dressing. There were several voices, both downstairs and outside. All the neighbours must have heard what was going on. The steamer would have attracted enough attention even during the day.

His mouth and throat were dry, and he went into the bathroom and turned on the cold tap. He drank from his cupped hands, then sluiced his face with water. Wiping his hands over his hair, he ran a comb through it, then headed downstairs.

"I'm sorry, sir," said his butler. "They just forced themselves in."

"Yes, Jenkins, I know," said Randall. "Go back to bed. Tell the rest of the staff there's nothing to worry about."

There were two police constables standing by the open front door, one inside the hallway, the other on the step outside. Mercer came into the house, followed by another man, then by the American.

The newcomer seemed familiar, but Randall couldn't place him. As he expected, it was not someone he'd worked for before. Randall had been the first, he was still the best, and his mnemographs never barbed.

The man was in his late 50s, tall and heavily built, with thinning hair which seemed unnaturally black. His face was drawn, his eyes haunted. He had the classic symptoms. The hooks were deep into him, no doubt of that.

Randall didn't expect an introduction, and there wasn't one.

"Ready?" said Mercer, and without waiting for a reply he led the way down to the basement.

Randall unlocked the studio door. It was time for a new lock, he remembered; it hadn't been much of a deterrent to Sergeant Irwin.

"Not you two," said Randall. "You don't come in here tonight."

Mercer nodded and took a backward step, but the second man didn't move.

"No," he said, speaking for the first time.

"Tell him to leave," Randall said. "Only you and me go through that door."

"Do as he says," said the subject. He spoke softly, wearily. He didn't need to raise his voice; he was used to being obeyed.

That was when Randall recognized him.

His name was James T. Elliot, and he was the Confederate Ambassador to the Court of St James. Over breakfast a few weeks ago, Randall had noticed Elliot's picture on the back page of *The Times* and read what happened when his airship arrived in England.

As a reward for financial help in the recent election campaign, the new President had appointed Elliot as his ambassador to Britain. No one had warned him not to take half a dozen of his slaves with him. The British authorities were embarrassed and tried to send the negroes back where they came from. But the news leaked out, and under British law all the slaves were given their freedom.

Elliot claimed this had been his intention from the beginning. Which proved he might not be such a bad diplomat after all.

And now he was barbed. A memory which wasn't real kept repeating itself, over and over and over; a diverting daydream had turned into a permanent obsession which stalked his subconscious.

"Lie down, please," Randall said, after locking the basement door. He didn't let on that he knew Elliot. It was always best to keep quiet about knowing his subject's identity.

Elliot lay on the couch by the wall. While he questioned him, Randall readied his equipment and moved things needlessly around. Subjects usually answered more truthfully if they weren't being stared at, or if the questions seemed nothing more than a way of filling the silence until Randall was ready.

The ambassador was vague about the origin of his cerebral intruder, but said he'd first sampled it soon after arriving in London. It was enjoyable, and he repeated it several times over the next week. By then, the novelty had worn off.

Randall knew that wouldn't have happened if it were one of his. He always added a random matrix, so that the experience was slightly different each time. It was like going to a restaurant and having the waiter choose the meal; the variety of dishes and number of courses were limited only by the menu. Sooner or later it was time to change the menu, and that was when Randall's clients returned to him.

The fugues began a few days after Elliot's last experience. They had started as brief flashes, but by now he could hardly concentrate on anything else. Awake or asleep, he was a hostage to the imagery. Which had changed. Imperceptibly at first, until now the capricious ghosts within his skull could possess him at will.

"You've got to help me," said Elliot. "I can't take much more. I really can't."

"I've done this before," Randall assured him. "Within a few hours, you'll be fine. Tell me what you can remember about the original simulation."

From the brief description, even allowing for Elliot's own interpretation, Randall was even more sure it wasn't one of his projections. The later ones would destroy themselves if anyone attempted to copy or modify them. Even if it were an older graph which had become radically distorted, there had to be some anchor point he'd have recognized. He guessed the fantasy had been personally patterned for Elliot, but that he was too ashamed to admit it.

It seemed like a formula violence-and-sex episode. Most of them were. A wish-fulfillment historical set in the plantations of the Deep South during the last century. The whipping of near-naked male slaves; the horseback chase; the capture and rape of female blacks; the final sexual humiliation of a white girl.

"And what's going on now?" Randall asked.

Elliot shook his head. His eyes were wide, unblinking, as if by being awake he could escape the nightmare. But there could be no salvation until the barbs which had sprung into

his mind were drawn.

"Try to relax," said Randall. The dreamscope would tell him far more than words could. "Let's put this on."

He slid the cap onto Elliot's head and fastened the strap beneath his chin, then turned the wingnuts around the rim to make sure that the copper band fitted close against the ambassador's temple.

"You see out with your eyes," he explained, while he focused the lenses in the visor directly onto Elliot's pupils. "And I can see in through them."

He relied more on his own mental talents to explore his subjects' minds than he did on his apparatus, which was there to enlarge and concentrate what he found. Although most people claimed they hated machines, they preferred to believe they were being examined by emotionless equipment. They didn't like the idea of another human awareness surveying their brain.

"This isn't like a visionic screen," Randall continued, trying to put Elliot at ease while he made his adjustments. "I don't see a picture of what you're thinking, only a representation of what's there. You can't slice a mnemograph open to see what's inside, because each one is a series of key images which your mind responds to. And every mind, every body, reacts differently. That's why even the simplest of them seems different to different people."

The dreamscope was tuned to Randall's own brain waves, which meant he was the only person who could understand what it showed. He glanced at the translucent face of the scope for a second, checking the hypnotic pattern which was spiralling directly onto the ambassador's retinas. When he looked back at him, Elliot was already under the technological spell.

Randall switched off the mesmerizing pulse and made sure the mesh of wires from Elliot's cap was properly connected to the scope. Pulling a chair closer to the couch, he sat down, reached for the other cap and checked the cables. He pushed back his hair and put the cap on his head, then began flicking switches.

Lights came on. White and yellow and red. The dreamscope started to hum, dials registering, needles climbing. The main light blinked on. It pulsed green. The initial sequence was over. Everything was ready.

As well as being linked to the scope via the cap, a length of flex stretched from the machine to Randall's right hand. A button nestled in his palm, and he squeezed it.

Then he went in.

Even on the edge, he sensed the fear. The imminent danger lurking within the darkest recesses of the cortex.

Often, the first problem was to locate the delusion, to trigger the reflex which would bring it into operation. But because Elliot's packaged dream had become corrupted, mutating into a memory implant, Randall almost immediately found himself enveloped in the rogue fantasy.

He ignored the details at first, and drifted away from the vortex to avoid the chemical tide of emotional panic.

Randall had once said that a good mnemograph needed the choreography of a classical ballet mixed with the diversity of a music hall. The balance had to be just right, with every turn followed by a different but complementary act. It was like drawing up the programme for a variety show on which the curtain never fell.

He was an artist. Like a painter, he could easily recognize

his own style and subject matter, the colours and textures which he favoured. Randall specialized in mindscapes. He knew his own unique work down to the last brushstroke. This had never been one of his programmes.

Just as he knew his own creations, so he could identify those of his rivals. At first, for a brief moment, he'd thought there was something familiar about this imprint. But it was all new to him.

That was no great surprise. What had once been rare and expensive equipment was now too easily available, which meant more graphs were being produced. The increase in quantity had inevitably led to a decline in quality. Being a brain surgeon took more than owning a scalpel, so why did everyone think they could produce wonderful psychic configurations just because they owned a dreamscope?

It took no great skill to cut up different mnemographs and patch them together, call it "examplimg" and present it as original work. Or genuine graphs would be decoded and pirated, each copy losing its clarity and focus, then sold at cut price. There were so many novices that they were becoming like hackney cabs, each competing to offer the cheapest ride. Laying a mental minefield was exactly the kind of trick that a hacker would try. It was no different from deliberately giving someone a cold, for example. Passing on a virus just for fun.

Only a professional, however, could have given Elliot such an intense headache – and done it with such flair. But why would a pro do that? It wasn't exactly sound business practice to turn a client's skull into a terror zone.

He wondered if Elliot had first experienced the mnemograph in the Americas, where so much progress had been made recently. That would explain why he couldn't identify the practitioner.

Whatever its origin, Randall admired the structure and composition. Format fantasy it might have appeared to be, but its treatment was far from routine.

He saw the way every random action could be met and followed through; he saw the limits within which total consistency was maintained; he saw how the subsidiary characters were more than mere cyphers. It was their function to reflect and obey the subject's desires. But they didn't, not any more. That was the problem. They did the opposite. They had turned against Elliot, seeking vengeance.

There was nothing very subtle about the reversal. The ambassador was now the helpless victim. Hunted and thrashed, tortured and raped.

Because Randall could sense the lingering resonance of Elliot's first graphic taste, he knew how much he'd savoured the original menu. He didn't feel much sympathy for Elliot, but it wasn't his job to judge. He was here to free him from the prison of his own brain.

Originally, the episode would have played itself through sequentially. But now, everything happened at once, invading his whole consciousness and destroying every other thought. Whenever Elliot tried to think of something else, perhaps even to console himself with a pleasant memory, he'd find that part of his brain already occupied by yet another image of degradation.

The negro slaves whipped him here, chased him there. Male or female, they gave as much mercy as he'd originally offered them.

And there was the white girl. Small, slim, still a virgin until the violent assault upon her innocence.

To Elliot, she was just another slave. That was all any

woman was. To him and to every man. Across the world and throughout history, men always treated women as their slaves.

Randall caught the thought, and wondered where it had come from. All women were slaves...?

The girl had blonde ringlets, wore a long white dress with several frilly petticoats beneath, and Elliot was terrified of her. She held up the knife. The blade was long and sharp, the handle thick and ridged. Her eyes widened and she smiled as she prepared to take her revenge.

Randall recognized the eyes, knew the smile. It was the blonde hair which had fooled him at first. When she turned away from Elliot and stared directly at him, there could be no doubt who she was. Even though she wasn't really there.

Only a phantom within Elliot's tormented mind, she was also his nemesis. Because she had created his apocalyptic vision.

Neither was Randall there. His point of view was an infinite perspective from which he surveyed the whole kaleidorama.

But they looked at each other.

"Hello, you brute," Juliette said.

Randall was on the other side of the street when he noticed the robbery. The two young thugs had chosen their moment well, because there was no one else close. If the victim had been a man, Randall would probably have done nothing. But he couldn't stand idly by while a woman was assaulted in broad daylight.

"You!" he yelled, as he dashed across the damp cobbles. "Stop that!"

He hoped they'd run away before he reached them, but they kept tugging at the woman's handbag. They pulled one way, and she pulled the other, refusing to let go even though one of them lashed out at her arms.

"I said -"

Randall grabbed the one who was hitting her and spun him around.

"- stop -"

He punched his right fist into his belly. The thief doubled up, clutching his stomach, and dropped. The other one tried to escape, but Randall caught his sleeve, dragged him back.

"- that!"

A swift left-handed uppercut, and the second attacker collapsed to the ground.

"You stop, you brute!"

Randall felt a blow on the side of his face. He leaned back quickly, deflecting the weapon with one arm and catching his attacker's hand with the other.

He looked down at the woman who had hit him with her umbrella, the woman he'd saved from being robbed. She was small, no more than five feet tall, and the hand which he clutched seemed tiny. He noticed her fingernails. They were painted black. That could explain why she'd hit him, he supposed.

"Let me free!" she said.

He watched as the two thieves scrambled away, then turned back to the woman.

"If you promise not to thump me," he said, letting go. "I was trying to help. I shouldn't have bothered."

"Violence was not needed," she said. "It was only money."

"Only money?"

That must have meant she had plenty. Her clothes looked expensive, he noticed, and her umbrella handle was ivory.



"They were poor. They were hungry. Driven to desperate acts because they are deprived of work by modern society."

"Jesus," muttered Randall.

He was poor. He was hungry. He didn't have work. He wondered if she'd mind if he took her money.

"And blasphemy is never needed!" she said.

"It's all I can afford," Randall told her, and he began to leave.

"Oh, you are injured!"

He touched the side of his face. His cheek had been cut by the umbrella.

"It's only blood," he said.

"Only blood?"

He looked at her again, seeing her properly for the first time. Her face was almost hidden by her bonnet. He stared into her eyes. The left one was pale blue, the right one dark brown. She was much younger than he'd thought, around 20, only a few years less than he was. Very pretty. Not the type he'd have expected to paint her nails black.

Her choice of words was a little odd and she had a foreign accent. At first, Randall thought she must have been a refugee from one of the wars which had ravaged the Continent over the past three decades. Refugees were usually poor, so she was more likely to be a political exile, her family having fled after an internal upheaval rather than an external invasion.

There had been no major European conflict for the past six or seven years. During that time the 20th century had begun. This coincidence was widely heralded as a new dawn for the whole world: it was to be the Century of Peace. Wars in the Balkans didn't seem to matter, and colonial conquests in the rest of the globe never did.

Randall knew it couldn't last. Another name would be needed before the decade was over.

"Your wound," she said, "you must let me dress it."

"It's only a scratch."

"Wounds may turn septic. I know about such things. My father, he is a doctor. Follow me. It is not far."

She began walking. She didn't look back. She was used to being obeyed.

There was nothing to lose, Randall supposed. He'd saved her from being robbed, and perhaps he might make something out of it. A small reward, perhaps a few shillings, maybe also a meal in the servants' pantry. Even if she hadn't told him about her father, he could tell from her manner that she lived in a house with servants.

He followed, to her side but half a pace behind.

"If money were all I had in my bag," she said, "those ruffians, they could have had it. Their need is greater than mine. But what I have here, it is far more valuable than money."

"You shouldn't carry valuables on your own."

"And why not? Because I am a woman?"

"No. Because it's dangerous to be out alone."

"For a woman?"

"For anyone."

"London, it is like a jungle. That is what you mean?"

"Yes."

She laughed. "It is not like a jungle. I lived in jungles. In jungles, no one robbed me." She turned to Randall. "I thank you for your help. I am sorry that I hit you."

"So am I. But why didn't you use your umbrella against the other two?"

"I am unsure. It is bad manners, is it not, to hit a person smaller than one's self?"

She glanced at Randall again. Her eyes were level with his chest, and she slowly looked upwards, taking in all of his six feet three inches. She smiled, and so did he.

"London, I think, it is not dangerous for a man such as yourself."

"Only when I meet a girl like you."

"You are a boy, yes?"

"What?"

"A simple question. You are a little boy? No. Not any more. You are an adult. You are a man. And I am not a girl. I am a woman. Understand?"

Randall gazed at her fingernails. He understood.

"I'd better be going," he said. He touched his cap, then started to cross the road.

"Mind!"

He jumped back quickly, just avoiding the wheels of a heavily laden wagon pulled by two lumbering oxen. Then he slipped and half-fell into the gutter, splattering his trousers with mud and filth. He stood up, swearing under his breath.

"The streets, they are dangerous for boys," she said. "Even big boys like you are."

She pulled out a lace handkerchief, put it to her mouth to moisten it, and dabbed at Randall's cheek. The red of his blood mingled with the pink from her lip-rouge. She began walking away, and Randall watched her go four yards, five, six, before he had to follow.

The house was enormous, with six broad stone steps leading up to the wide front door. The door was opened by a servant girl. Or maybe, he thought, a servant woman.

"Good afternoon, Mademoiselle Juliette," she said.

Mademoiselle Juliette? Did that mean she was French, or was that how servants always spoke to their mistresses?

"Tell the upstairs maid, she will draw a bath in the servants' quarters," she said. "Tell the laundry girl, she will clean some clothes."

"Yes, mademoiselle," said the servant. "Your hat, sir?"

As he watched her hang his cap from one of the sets of antlers mounted on the wall, Randall realized this was the first time anyone had ever called him "sir" and meant it.

This was what he wanted, he decided. Servants. A big house. This was what he was going to have.

Juliette took off her bonnet. Her hair was jet-black. Cut as short as a man's.

Servants. A big house. And a girl like Juliette might be if she grew her silky hair long enough to frame her pale face and delicate features.

She opened her bag and pulled out a black metal box, padlocked and bound with leather straps. Although it was small, it was very heavy.

"What's in there?" asked Randall. "Gold?"

"Worth more than gold," Juliette told him. "I must give my father it."

He followed her again. Down the wide hallway and through the door at the end of the corridor. Randall had expected a doctor's surgery, but the room was like a small factory. What resembled a huge church organ stood against the far wall. It had no keyboard, but it hummed and whined like some mechanical animal, compressed air hissing from its pipes. A complex series of alloy tubes linked the apparatus to several other strange machines.

"What is all this?" he said.

As soon as Elliot and the two policemen were out of the

house, Randall called his butler and chauffeur. He gave them their instructions, and Jenkins dressed himself in Randall's hat and overcoat. They were to drive off in exactly ten minutes.

Randall went upstairs and got ready. At the same time as the chauffeur was driving the butler away, he left by the servants' entrance.

It was a chilly night, clear of any fog, but his breath condensed in the dark air to create his own patch of mist. He turned back on his route several times, waiting in doorways and checking that he wasn't being followed, before finally slipping into the city's maze of narrow alleys. If the roads and streets were the capital's arteries, then these were its veins.

He could feel scores of eyes following him every inch of the way, wondering who he was, if he was worth rolling. Although his clothes were shabby and patched, they were still worth a few pence. But he was big and strong, too dangerous to tackle.

If he hadn't met Juliette, this was probably where Randall would still be living. If he'd still been alive.

He'd survived the slums, and he had the big house and servants that he wanted. But he didn't have a girl like Juliette. Or even Juliette. Not any more. He'd survived her, too.

When he reached Trafalgar Bridge, he paused and leaned against the parapet, pulling up his threadbare collar against the wind. He lit a cigar and looked at the shacks and tents which lined the embankment. Fires glowed all along the pavement. Even in the middle of the night, exotic aromas filled the cold air and strange voices drifted through the stillness.

While its European neighbours suffered invasions and annexations, civil wars and revolutions, Great Britain had built the greatest empire the world had ever known. The Century of Peace had lasted until 1914, but the British Empire had again avoided being drawn into the war. London was its capital, and sometimes it seemed as though everyone in the empire had come to live here.

He realized he was being watched, but relaxed when he noticed the two urchins gazing up at him from the shadows. Instead of dropping his cigar stub into the Thames, he threw it to the ground. The children immediately dived for it, pushing and shoving at each other.

"Here," he said, holding out a hand to each of them.

They grabbed the sixpences and rushed away. Randall smiled for a moment.

"Taxi!" he called, and immediately a rickshaw appeared from the darkness.

"Why you go?" the cabbie seemed to say. Which was a good question.

A coded signal inside a capricious mnemograph, and he'd dropped everything. Randall knew Juliette wanted to see him even less than he wanted to see her, that she'd only called him because there was no alternative. Once again, he was going to her rescue.

It was ten years since they'd seen each other, another ten since they'd first met.

Randall had been luxuriating in the hot bath when she walked in.

"Do not get up," she'd said. "I am here to ask if anything is needed by you."

"No...nothing," he told her, his hands covering his groin.

She was dressed in canvas trousers and a cotton shirt, which she must have been wearing beneath her ankle-length coat. At least she wore lip-rouge and eye-tint. If it weren't for

that, she could almost have been mistaken for a young man.

Randall wondered why such a pretty girl was an equalist. What made her want to hide her femininity?

"You and I, we have not been introduced," she continued. "My name, it is Juliette Eve."

Juliette's father was Swiss, Randall was to discover, and her mother was English but had died when she was three years old. She had been born in England, but grew up in Switzerland – and Africa and Asia, where her father worked in missionary hospitals. His name was Doctor Kastring, a surname which Juliette had renounced because it was imposed through the paternal line. Instead, she'd chosen Eve. The Bible said that was the name of the first woman, and Juliette believed in the Bible. Or some of it.

"I'm Albert Randall," he said, and decided it would be best not to offer his hand.

It seemed that Juliette was here for more than just an introduction, because she sat down on the edge of the bath.

"Do not be embarrassed, Randall," she told him. "You are made in the image of God, and many naked men I have seen."

She was not referring to white men, however, only to the naked savages of distant lands. Her father's family had made its fortune from selling armaments to every country in Europe, but Kastring had been unable to reconcile war with Christianity. He left Switzerland for the darkest corners of the globe, where he devoted himself to healing the poorest and most wretched of souls. He finally concluded that civilization was nothing but a polite mask which hid the ugly face of barbarism. There were more savages in any capital city than in all of the world's jungles. Kastring and his daughter had moved to London.

"I see you are strong and fit," said Juliette. "What employment have you had?"

"Shipyard apprentice. I was going to be a riveter, but then I joined the merchant navy. I've done some boxing." Randall shrugged. "What about you? What do you do?"

He guessed that she didn't do anything. She didn't need to. Hers was a world of wealth and privilege, which allowed her the freedom to look and dress however she wanted.

"I assist my father," she said.

Doctor Kastring believed that all illness was caused by one thing: an imbalance in the brain. The brain controlled the entire body, and if a person was sick it was because the wrong chemicals were being produced or because the right ones weren't reaching the affected part of the body. By studying the patient's brain, the fault could be found and corrected. If it were in perfect working order, the body's natural defences could defeat every disease. Kastring had designed and built his own elaborate equipment to reach deep into the human brain, discover any imperfection, then alter the mechanism. It could all be done as precisely as adjusting a clock from his native country.

The word "cuckoo" sprang to mind, but Randall said nothing.

"A healthy mind is needed for a healthy body," said Juliette. "Your body, it looks healthy. As for your mind..."

She stared into Randall's eyes as if trying to see what he was thinking. For a moment he almost believed she knew, but he supposed it wasn't difficult to guess. Every man who was with a girl like Juliette would have similar thoughts.

"You saw the apparatus of my father," she continued. "A young man, he is not. We require a person for help with the heavy parts of our work."

"You mean," said Randall, "there are some things a woman can't do. You need a man."

"Do you want this employment?"

"Depends on the pay and prospects."

"Another person can be found." She stood up. "You are not the only one."

He took the job.

Juliette spent most of her free time campaigning for what she claimed was the country's, and the world's, largest minority: women. Her nails were painted black in mourning for the suppression of her sex. Although she was a new woman, she said she didn't hate all men. Just most of them.

For a long time Randall believed she didn't hate him. He even thought that she loved him.

But he was wrong. She hated all men, and she hated him most of all.

That was why, ten years ago, she'd tried to kill him.

"Isn't this how you always liked me, Albert?" said Juliette, her voice little more than a whisper. "In bed, flat on my back?"

"No," said Randall. "That was how you liked me."

"I'm in no condition for that kind of thing. Not any more."

"Pity. That's the only reason I came."

It had taken the rest of the night and most of the morning until he finally reached her. He'd had to travel down to Sussex, to within a few miles of the coast. The farm cottage lay at the end of a dirt track, and Juliette lay in the back room.

She looked at him, at his muddy old clothes.

"You haven't changed in 20 years," she said. "What about me?"

He hardly recognized her. She was ill, that was why she was in bed, but she must have been far worse than ill. Her body had always been slender, but now it was thin; her complexion had always been pale, but now it was white. Etched with dark lines, her face was gaunt and hollow, and what remained of her hair had turned grey. Only her eyes were the same: the left one pale blue, the right one dark brown.

"No jokes about turning from a new woman to an old woman," she said.

She looked twice as old as she really was, and it wasn't something Randall would joke about. He was shocked by her appearance.

"I look like death, I know," she said. "Not really surprising. I'll be dead soon."

"What's happened to you?"

"The same thing that happened to my father."

Kastring had dramatically aged during the weeks before his death. Had Juliette inherited the same fatal disease?

"His research killed him," she added, "and now it's killing me."

"But it wasn't dangerous to you. Was it?"

"We never considered it at the time. Even if we knew, we'd have continued. We were on God's mission to heal the modern illnesses of mankind."

"Mankind?"

Juliette managed a smile. "Humankind. Father would have considered death as a reward, a quicker route to the afterlife. Although now I wish there were a slower route."

As she pulled the bed covers up around her throat, Randall noticed that her fingernails were still black.

"I can no longer paint them," she said. "Two young women do everything for me. Or they did. They are gone now, because I don't need them any more. They were the ones who

barbed the ambassador."

The room was small, and it appeared even smaller because the dreamscape and its auxiliaries took up a lot of space. The scope was an old design, but all the other equipment was much newer. There were a couple of pieces Randall didn't recognize.

"But it was your graph?"

"Yes. My body may be decrepit, but there's nothing wrong with my mind. I knew they'd ask you to uncoil the barbs, that you'd find my message. And me."

"Wouldn't it have been easier to write?"

"No. They hoped to find me through you, and you were under constant observation. They want me dead. And they won't have long to wait."

"Who wants you dead?"

"The ones who run the country."

"The government?"

"The ones who run the government."

Juliette claimed there was nothing wrong with her mind, but Randall doubted it. Had she become as senile as she appeared?

"I knew you would come, Albert."

"You'd have done the same for me."

"Would I?" Juliette tried to laugh, but she started coughing. She coughed until she ran out of breath, then she inhaled very slowly. "Sit down."

Randall looked at her.

"Please."

He pulled up a chair and sat next to the bed.

"The heavy elements that we used in the early days were like poison," she said. "There are still traces inside me. They radiated through my body, slowly destroying me."

"What about me? Was I poisoned?"

"Probably."

"Then I'm going to die?"

"We're all going to die. Some of us sooner than others. You shouldn't concern yourself too much, Albert. You were contaminated far less than we were. We stopped researching the decay of heavy metals soon after you joined us."

"But am I decaying? What about the things you did to me?"

It had taken Randall a while to realize he hadn't been hired simply as a labourer. Kastring took him on because he was fit and healthy; because he wanted to make him unfit and unhealthy, then fit and healthy again. The only difference between Randall and a laboratory animal was that he could be questioned about his symptoms and progress.

The theory that physical illness was mental in origin was never proved. If Randall hadn't been so healthy, Kastring's experiments would probably have killed him – because his machines almost certainly wouldn't have cured him.

When he discovered what was going on, Randall nearly walked out. He only stayed because of Juliette. Because she said she'd no idea what her father had been doing to him. And because they were lovers. He wasn't convinced about the former, but there was no arguing with the latter.

"I thought you liked the things I did to you," said Juliette.

Randall nodded, but that wasn't what he was thinking about. Kastring had died. Juliette was dying. Would he also die like this, his body shrunken and wasted away? If so, when...?

Juliette reached out, her bony hand squeezing his. "Remember?" she said.

While Kastring continued his experiments, Juliette began

to conduct her own analysis of brain functions. Adapting her father's methods and equipment, she probed into someone else's mind. Randall was that someone else.

"That is what you want to do with me?" she'd said, after her first exploration.

"Yes."

"I agree. We should do it."

Randall remembered. He had gazed into her eyes, uncertain whether she'd really experienced his thoughts or not. Because it was all he'd been thinking of ever since they met, no special apparatus was needed to read what was on his mind.

"It was as if we were already lovers," said Juliette, as she also remembered. "We shared our thoughts before we shared our bodies, and thought is the most erotic of the senses. Sex in the head is better than physical sex."

Randall had never been convinced about that. "But you were very physical," he said.

"And you were very cerebral."

"That surprised you, didn't it?"

"I knew you were good with your hands, Albert," Juliette squeezed his hand again, and he hardly felt it. "But you shared my mind, and that must have made you brainy."

"Of course." He smiled. "Just as my body gave you muscles."

"I wish I had muscles now," she said.

They became a couple, a team. Loving each other, working with each other. They called it research.

Although they could share their bodies, their minds never merged. One could send thoughts, and the other could receive them, but there was no simultaneous communication.

That was how they discovered a way of transmitting images which the brain could decipher. They called it the dream-scope.

"You did surprise me, Albert," said Juliette. "I realized you were a man of many untapped skills that time with the scribe. No matter what I or my father did, it wouldn't scroll. You got it working."

"I just booted it up the arse."

"Exactly. That was where the phrase 'booting up' came from. What were the others?"

Randall shrugged. He couldn't remember them all. Juliette and her father had invented things which they didn't have words for. They hadn't needed any, because they always knew what the other one meant. They experimented with wooden boxes crammed full of bar magnets, the polarities of which constantly reversed whenever an electric current flowed through them. The magnets were of irregular shapes and sizes, and Randall once said they looked like chips. So chips they became.

One of his early jobs was to fill these boxes with as many parallel chips as he could. He'd begun using a mallet to ram in extra magnets. The more chips in a box, therefore, the higher its ram capacity.

"You were counting the length of copper filaments," said Juliette, "and mentioned how the patterns looked like teeth-marks. That was when we started measuring in bites. You had such an instinctive feel for what we were doing, Albert, whereas my approach was far more theoretical. They were great days. We had some wonderful times together."

"Until you tried to kill me."

"I did not. I did not. I did not." Her accent returned for a moment, until she began coughing again. "I didn't know you were there. When father died, I was so lost, so empty. I didn't



like what we were doing with his equipment, where our research was leading us. It was a betrayal of his beliefs, and I wanted it to stop."

"So you started a fire." Randall stood up and walked to the window, staring out at the Downs.

"It was mine. I'd inherited all my father's equipment. I could do what I wanted with it, and I didn't want to use it any more."

It was mine. That was the way Juliette had always thought about him, Randall realized. He belonged to her. And if she didn't want him any more, she could discard him like a broken slide wheel.

"You never visited me in hospital," he said. "You never even sent a card. 'Sorry for nearly burning you alive. Get well soon.' I never heard from you again until last night."

"It was already over between us, Albert."

"But there was no need to..." He shook his head.

"I was sorry, believe me, so very sorry. I didn't want to hurt you. I wanted to stop you, that's all."

"You almost did. Permanently."

"But you carried on."

Randall nodded. He had carried on. The first thing he did after leaving hospital was go into the nearest hardware store. He'd begun building his own machines. Better machines, faster machines. He had the skill to do it.

"You used to hate rich bastards, Albert," said Juliette. "Now you're one of them."

"Redistribution of wealth," he said, returning to his chair. "You should approve of that."

"It's not the rich you've made your money from. It's the poor. That's the only redistribution of wealth that ever happens in this country. You've become corrupt. You peddle violence and sex to the masses. Boxing and bordellos."

"What's wrong with that? It's what people want. It's what they enjoy."

"It's a drug which keeps them sedated, in thrall to the ruling class. The dreamscope could have given the proletariat self-awareness. All they get from you is self-abuse."

"You can't tell people what to think, Juliette."

"They can be given the chance of thinking. Isn't that what you were given?"

It was an argument they used to have years ago. Juliette always wanted to impose her views on other people, although she never saw it like that. Intelligent and independent, educated and emancipated, she believed the world would be a far better place if everyone thought the same way she did. She was wrong, but Randall had never won the argument.

"The dreamscope could have changed the world," she said. "A new way of learning, of passing on information, of banishing ignorance, of appreciating art, culture, literature. Knowledge is power, Albert, and knowledge should mean freedom from the shackles of capitalism."

"That's only going to happen in heaven."

"I'll let you know when I get there."

"Oh God! I didn't mean..."

"I know you didn't. As for God, I'll be meeting her very soon." She took hold of Randall's hand again, then turned her head towards the bank of equipment stacked close to the bed. "What do you think of all this?"

"You've some interesting stuff."

"Some of it's my own design, some was smuggled here from the Union. You should go there, Albert. The North is finally developing its industrial and technical potential. They

were paralleling our work 15 years ago, and now they're ahead. I was living there until last year. It's because of these machines, and what I've been doing with them, that they want me dead."

"And what have you been doing?"

"Changing minds. It's the first step to changing the world."

Randall said nothing. Her body might have looked old, but he knew now that Juliette's mind was exactly the same.

"I wanted the world to change like that." She snapped her fingers, but there was no sound. "Exactly. Because it can't be done like that. Step by step, that's the way it has to be. That's the way I've been doing it. Starting with votes for women."

"You're still campaigning for that?"

"It's been more than a campaign, Albert. You must be aware of what's happened lately. Newspaper editorials, the feeling amongst informed opinion, pressure within government circles."

"You mean..." Randall gestured towards the stack of machinery.

"Yes. We've given the right people the right thoughts."

"You've barbed their mnemographs?"

"Very, very subtly."

"The one you gave Elliot wasn't very subtle."

"That was different, Albert. It was devised to bring you here. The ambassador is the type of influential person we can reach. Everyone uses mnemographs. Yes, for pleasure, I realize that. So we give them the best. But we add something extra they never know about. That's the way to change the world. Persuade the decision makers, and they'll change it for you."

Randall wasn't convinced. "Women haven't got the vote."

"Not yet. It takes time. Within two or three years, believe me, there will be votes for women. Half the population will finally have a say in the affairs of state. Imagine how things will change!" As she spoke, she raised her head from the pillow for the first time.

"Women," she continued, "will use their votes to make Britain a better place. And when we have the first woman prime minister, tolerance and kindness will replace aggression and greed. The rich will be squeezed to pay for new schools and free hospitals." Her head sank back, her final words little more than a wheeze. "There is an alternative."

Randall wondered how this fitted in with Juliette's theory that Britain was really run by a secret autocracy, a ruling elite who also wanted her dead.

"I want to be here when women get the vote, Albert. I don't want to die!"

Her hand tightened on his, and this time he could feel her grip. It was as if she were desperately holding onto life. He returned her squeeze, not knowing what to say.

"And if you help me, Albert, I don't have to. It's what I've worked for all my life. I want to see it happen."

"You will, Juliette. You could live for years."

"I could. But my body couldn't. Only you can help me. Everything's ready. It will take all your skill. You know what I'm going to ask?"

He suddenly realized. "It's not possible." He stood up and walked over to the impressive array of equipment. "Is it?"

"It is," she whispered, turning her head. "It's only one step beyond what we've both been doing. Thoughts can be made into electrical impulses. That's how the dreamscope works. In theory, every function of the brain can be electrically recreated. Synapses open and close like switches. Neural pathways

are like connecting wires."

"And where's your soul, Juliette?"

"If you've managed without one, so can I."

"You'd need hundreds of memory files. Nothing has that capacity."

"This system does. There's an advanced way of storing data, of condensing it onto a new type of mnemograph. I know it will work."

"It might not," said Randall, knowing it could not.

"It's the only chance I have," she breathed. "I want my mind to live."

Running his fingers over the surfaces of the new apparatus, Randall could sense their latent power. He wanted to open them up, to see what was inside, to find out exactly what they could do. This was quality material, he could tell. It was the kind of stuff he could have developed himself. If Juliette hadn't destroyed everything in the fire, forcing him to begin again from nothing.

"Will you help me, Albert? Please. Will you copy my brain onto a mnemograph?"

Randall shook his head.

"No," he said.

He was sitting 20 yards from the cottage, smoking a cigar, when the police arrived. There were four of them, including Mercer. None of them was in uniform. They ran up to the cottage, but couldn't get close because of the flames.

Randall had guessed they would be here. They wanted to find Juliette, and he was the bait. But they were too late to find anything. It was a pity about the new equipment. Better that everything was destroyed than the police had it. Now that he knew it existed, he could buy whatever he needed. Or develop his own version.

"What happened?" said Mercer.

"You can see what happened." Randall gestured towards the burning cottage. "Juliette likes lighting fires. Liked, I mean."

"She's in there? She killed herself?"

Randall nodded, watching the black smoke from the blaze drift up towards the sky. He exhaled, adding more smoke to the air.

"What was the message inside the ambassador's mind?" said Mercer.

"Juliette asked me to come here."

"Why?"

"Because she also wanted to kill me. A suicide pact, except I hadn't signed up. The place was booby-trapped. She first tried to kill me ten years ago."

"You're sure she's inside?"

"What's left of her."

"We'll know if it's her. If she's not there, if you've helped her get away..."

"You'll find Juliette's dead body," said Randall.

"Good riddance to the equalist bitch," said Mercer, as he stared at the cottage.

Randall hit him. A right-handed punch square against the side of Mercer's chin. The policeman slumped to the ground, and a moment later two of the other officers grabbed Randall.

"What," said Mercer, gazing up and rubbing his jaw, "did you do that for?"

"Because...er...because I'm upset," said Randall. "Juliette's dead. We were...very close. I once wanted to marry her."

"In that case," said Mercer, as the other policemen helped

him to his feet, "it seems like you had another lucky escape. Search him, inch by inch."

"What are we looking for, sir?"

"Mnemographs. Something that could be part of a machine. Anything at all suspicious." Mercer stepped close to Randall. "I know you can afford a fancy lawyer, and I'd be wasting my time arresting you for assaulting an officer in the course of his duties." He stroked his cheek, then glanced at the fire. "You'll have to make a full statement about this. And from now on, I'll be watching you. Right?"

Randall yawned.

"Nothing, sir," said one of the policemen, finally.

"I won't offer you a lift with us, Randall," said Mercer. "You made your own way here. You can make your own way back."

"Very kind of you to think of me," Randall told him, as he pulled the old boots onto his feet again. "But I'm looking forward to a pleasant country walk."

After everything that had happened, a walk was the last thing he wanted. He'd been awake all night, he hadn't eaten and he felt exhausted. What he needed was a taxi ride to the nearest hotel.

He stood up, took a final look at the blazing cottage, threw down his cigar, squashed it with his heel, then turned, walking away down the dirt track until he was out of sight.

Mercer had asked Randall why he hit him. Randall wondered the same thing at first. But he hadn't done it.

"Why did you hit him, Juliette?"

There was no coherent answer, only a series of disjointed images and thoughts.

Police. Repression. Mercer. Male. Beast. Curiosity.

"How did it feel?"

Positive. Satisfying.

"Don't do it again."

The fact that she'd been able to do it at all was bad enough. He'd have to keep more control from now on. Total control.

"You were right. It may not be heaven, but there is an after-life. For you."

He sensed her query. It wasn't explicit. An awareness.

"Because if I'd transferred your brain onto a graph, the police could simply have wiped it. And because I wanted to know if it could be done. If my body goes the same way as yours, I'll want to switch my mind somewhere else."

Forever.

This time: a word he could understand.

"You're not staying inside me forever."

Forever.

Again. Except now he understood her meaning: that transferring his mind could mean forever.

"Immortality!"

Another body. And another. Forever.

"I'd be the richest bastard in history."

And change the world.

"Ha!"

Own cremation: odd feeling. Here: odd feeling. Being alive. Almost. Good feeling. Could like this.

"No! It's temporary. Until your mind can be copied."

Machine? Body?

"We can't steal someone's body, erase their mind. That's like being a vampire."

Forever.

"No."

Forever and ever.

"Maybe."
 Together forever.
 "No!"
 Loved each other.
 "Once."
 More than once.
 "Then we hated each other."
 Could love again.
 "No."

Randall looked at his fist, at the skinned knuckles where Juliette had hit Mercer. No. He'd hit Mercer. It was his body. His alone. She was a guest. That was all. Temporary.

He should do something about his fingernails. Paint them black.

"No!"
 Joke.
 "No jokes."
 Vote?

"No votes! No nothing! I'm not dressing as a woman so you can vote. Stop! No thinking."

Nothing else.
 "Or I'll delete you as soon as I can."
 Wouldn't. Couldn't. Need me. Love me.
 "I don't."

This?
 "Ah!"

Randall remembered Juliette's words. Or she remembered for him. Sex in the head is better than physical sex.

"Ah!"

She had passed beyond the physical, into the absolutely cerebral.

"Ah!"
 Remember?
 "I don't remember that."
 Will. Together. Again.

A half-thought began to form. Before it could coalesce, he recognized a familiar sound. Juliette's laughter silently echoed through his skull. He could picture her smile, see her incongruous eyes flashing.

"I never knew you had such a dirty mind."

It was the same as the first time they met. Randall had always believed he'd rescued her, but now he finally realized it was Juliette who had ensnared him. Once more, he was her willing victim.

Forever...?

David Garnett's previous stories for *Interzone* are "Saving the Universe" (issue 3), "The Only One" (issue 22), "Now Read On..." (issue 39), "Off the Track" (issue 63) and "A Friend Indeed" (issue 89). See Stan Nicholls's interview with him which follows.

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SPACESHOPS & SOLICITORS

David Garnett
interviewed by
Stan Nicholls



Photograph: Frances Jobling

"The last novel I wrote under my own name was *Time in Eclipse*," David Garnett says, "and that was over 20 years ago."

Why the long hiatus? "Just chance. My early novels, *Mirror in the Sky* and *The Starseekers*, sold to an American publisher straight off despite being first drafts. I then started to re-write more heavily. Apart from short stories, I couldn't sell to the States."

Not that he's been idle since then. Far from it, having produced over 20 pseudonymous books — "most of them better forgotten" — in various genres, and nine science-fiction anthologies bearing the Garnett byline. Now, with the recent publication of humorous sf romp *Stargonauts*, his name is finally back on an original novel.

Hooked on the field from 14, since coming across a copy of Brian Aldiss' *More Penguin Science Fiction* in his school library, he still finds it hits the button for him. "Although not as often, to be honest. But when you read a good science-fiction novel, or short story, it's far better than the best of anything else. It still feels exciting and still that sense of wonder comes back, and you realize why you're reading the stuff. The majority of sf I've read recently has been in manuscript form, submitted to my anthologies, and when you get a really excellent story you *are* excited. It reaffirms your belief in science fiction. I don't read the stuff as much as I used to, but when I do, I'm glad I do. Of course, dealing with it professionally does tend to blunt the senses a bit, because whatever you read, you're always analysing and criticizing it."

Does he see the increased popularity of sf over the last decade or so as having damaged the genre in any way? "I'm not sure about the increased popularity. There might *seem* to be more readers of science fiction, but I don't think there really are. Your average paperback 20 years ago would sell 15,000 or 20,000

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over the remains of habitable
Earth.

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copies. Now, 5,000 is a normal sale; in fact that's quite good in some circumstances. You go to the sf section in bookshops and it's full of horror, fantasy and spin-offs like *Star Trek*. There isn't that much actual *science fiction* around.

"Then again, the death of science fiction is something people have been moaning about for as long as I can remember. What is it that can make a new readership appreciate sf? They can get cheap thrills out of horror, and their taste for the exotic from fantasy. The difference is that science fiction literally does appeal more to the intellect. It's an old cliché to say that, but it's true. It's the thinking person's literature. I can't see why anyone wants to read detective novels, thrillers or mainstream fiction when you can just switch on TV and see that kind of stuff in the news. I'll try to read out of the genre; I'll start a thriller now and again, but I find most of them just dull."

Garnett's first novel, published in 1969, was written when he was 19. "I'd sent a lot of stories to Mike Moorcock and got lots of rejections from him, and other places, and they totalled about 60,000 words," he explains. "In those days 60,000 words was a novel, and I thought, 'Why don't I write one?' So I wrote *Mirror in the Sky*, which took me six weeks.

"Just about everything coming out in Britain at that time was American reprints, and the main publishers here were Gollancz

and Faber. I tried *Mirror in the Sky* with both of them, and they each took about three months to say no. So I sent it to Berkley Books in America. As a matter of fact, I sent it to Damon Knight at his home, by surface mail, because he was the reader for Berkley. He wrote back saying he'd recommended it to Berkley, and they offered a thousand dollars for it. I accepted the offer and the contract arrived eight weeks to the day after I'd posted the manuscript.

"I didn't *know* it was difficult. I thought you just wrote a book, sent it off to a publisher and they bought it. Which is exactly what happened in my case. It's different now. It takes publishers eight weeks to *blink* these days. I think the time publishers keep you waiting is one of the worst aspects of being a writer. They take a long time to respond, a long time to give you a contract, a long time to give you the money; and it's even longer before they publish the book. That's why, as an editor, I always reply to submissions as quickly as I can. Unless you don't want to encourage them to send you any more, of course! As I said, my first rejection was from Michael Moorcock at *New Worlds*, and it makes such a difference when you get a personal reply. I feel that no matter how bad a story I get in, I've got to write back instead of sending an anonymous form letter. You try and personalize it a little bit. And you don't want to say, 'The best thing you can do is cut your fingers off,' even though you might think it.

"I also try to pay contributors as soon as possible. All my anthologies have been payment on acceptance. Otherwise authors are subsidizing publishers with their money and time. I'm always keen with my own contracts to get as much of the money up front as I can, rather than wait for payment on publication, because they can delay that for 18 months or more."

The second novel was *The Starseekers*. "By that time people were saying, 'You should have an agent in America.' That was mainly Mike [Moorcock] and Brian [Aldiss], I think, who I knew slightly in those days, and they both had Scott Meredith as their U.S. agent. I sent the manuscript of *Starseekers* to Scott Meredith, and eventually they said, 'This isn't the kind of thing an American publisher would want.' I told them that was fair enough, and could they pass on the manuscript to Berkley? They never did. So I sent Berkley the carbon, right? The only other copy of it. And Berkley bought it. Just like that."

Don't try this at home, kids. Sending out the only copy of your manuscript is living dangerously. "Yeah, I suppose it does seem rather... I don't know, *innocent* in a way, to trust the only copy I had to the mail like that. I did it because photocopies cost a shilling a page. And they still cost a shilling a page. Here we are, 25 years later, and the price hasn't gone up. But in those days a shilling was a pint of beer. I couldn't *afford* to photocopy a whole book. It cost a fortune. I did the same thing with a 15,000-word story I

had in *F&SF*. All I had was a top copy. I never made a carbon because I didn't have any carbon paper. I sent it off to them and they bought it. If it had got lost, that would have been it."

It may sound depressing for anyone just starting out, but the first 20 years of a writer's career, he says, are the worst. "Yes, it can take that long to get solvent. After that you start getting reprints, and extra money coming in from nowhere. Like, money comes in from Lithuania, or Poland. Your PLR comes in, too. And you think, 'Hey, this is like getting free money!'"

"Most books you do the publisher knows aren't going to sell enough to earn out their advances, and they budget for that. But sometimes things take off and you're making royalties from them years and years later. It's weird in a way. It's like being a plumber and getting paid every time someone uses a shower you've installed. Something you did for 15 hundred pounds ten years ago can end up making you five times as much. The only thing is you come to *expect* that every six months."

"It doesn't always work out like that. Robert Hale did the hardback of *Time in Eclipse*, and Lionel Trippett of Arrow told me they would pay £250 for the paperback rights. But Hale only asked for £200, of which I got 50 per cent. Later I met Chris Foss, who did the cover, and he told me he'd been paid £250 for it. And I got 100 quid for the book!"

"I can remember, years and years ago, being summoned to the tax office, and they gave me a really heavy grilling. They didn't believe I was living on a fiver a week. I thought, 'Why?' Because everything was legit; I was earning so little I couldn't hide anything, even if I'd wanted to. There's no way of hiding anything anyway. I mean, what do they expect you to do? Phone up an editor and say, 'I'll write you a novel for 500 quid, *cash*?' It just doesn't happen like that. In the end, it turned out to be the *other* David Garnett they were after, the one who wrote *Lady Into Fox* and *Aspects of Love*. But when I convinced them, all they said was, 'Oh, I wonder where *he* lives?' I didn't get an apology or anything."

Further confirmation that, for the majority of authors, vast wealth is elusive. "Yes, but there are other compensations. You've got the freedom of not getting up until midday if you want to; of working all night if you want, of taking a day off or going to the pictures in the afternoon. That's worth more than a nine-to-five job, I think. I can't understand these writers who treat it like a nine-to-five job. These days in America you can get a *degree* in authorship. It's a career option. Instead of becoming an accountant you become an author. You put your suit on and work nine-to-five turning out fantasy trilogies. And do very well, thank you. These are the people who write books based on books

they've read. This used to be the thing about science fiction. I remember Tom Disch was on a panel at the first convention I went to, in Bristol in 1967, and he said, 'If you've done nothing, and know nothing, write science fiction'."

As he's so prolific, presumably Garnett is very organized in his working methods? "Well, I do spend a lot of time preparing things. Then as soon as I start writing it goes off in a completely different direction. *Stargonauts* was like that. What happens in *Stargonauts* should have happened in about the first third of the book. But it doesn't. The characters kind of took over and filled the entire first volume. But something's often best if you just let it go that way."

Does he set himself a daily word quota? "Do I fuck! I'd like to, but I'm totally disorganized. You want to see my *office*... But out of chaos somehow I produce these books, although it amazes me that I've managed to do nine anthology volumes."

To date, these have been *Zenith*, *The Orbit SF Yearbook* and the current incarnation of the prestigious *New Worlds*. "I had the idea

"It wasn't as bad as I thought it would be. I actually *enjoyed* getting in manuscripts, reading them and working with authors. It gets so that you can immediately tell the writers who are going to make it. For example, I got stuff in from Simon Ings and Peter F. Hamilton, and I *knew* that sooner or later they were going to sell books. Unfortunately you also get a lot of things from people who just can't write. For instance, I had a number of stories about virtual reality and video games, but when video is spelt 'vidio' all the way through you know you don't need to read it."

At this stage we indulge ourselves in an aside about one of Garnett's hobby horses — typographical errors. "When *Mirror in the Sky* was published I started reading through it. It starts off in a spaceship, and on about page 7 there was a typo. It says 'the spaceship'. So when I was asked to do a 100-word Drabble, mine was called 'The Spaceshop', and every alternate word had a one-letter misprint. At the end, the character says, 'Oh, *shut*!' My favourite was in the hardback edition of one of the *Interzone* anthologies. I had a story called 'The Only One' in it, which contained the line, 'I satiated my base lusts elsewhere.' Only 'elsewhere' got changed to 'everywhere' — which made a little bit of a difference!"

"But the best I had wasn't so much a typo as a misuse of the language. It was in a covering letter from a writer, who said, 'I've been writing to publishers, but most of them say they don't accept unsolicited manuscripts. I've no idea how to get one of my manuscripts read by a solicitor.' I thought it had to be a joke. But it wasn't. And this idiot sent me a really god-awful manuscript. I hope he's not an *Interzone* reader."

By the time *Zenith 2* came out, Sphere had been sold to Macdonald, eventually merging with the Orbit imprint, and they didn't want to continue the series. "At that point Mike Moorcock said to me, 'How about we revive *New Worlds* and you edit it?' The only catch was I had to find a publisher. Now, I didn't want to go to a publisher and say, 'Do you want to do *New Worlds*?' I thought people would leap on the idea just for the sake of *New Worlds*. So I pretended I was looking for someone to continue *Zenith*. No one took the bait until the world convention in Holland. I was talking to [Gollancz editor] Richard Evans there and he said, yes, he'd like to publish an original anthology but was seeking a different way of doing it. When I suggested a revival of *New Worlds* he got really excited and said, 'I can give you an almost definite answer — *yes*.' By the time we got back to England it was settled and Gollancz agreed to do four volumes."

So it was the power of the title as much as anything? "It was partly the power of the title. Richard wanted to do an anthology anyway and the title convinced him. But I didn't want to do an anthology just as *New Worlds*. I



Photograph: Frances Jobling

that someone should put together an anthology of original British sf to coincide with the British Worldcon in 1987," he recalls. "But I didn't want to do it myself; I didn't want to have to read all those manuscripts. So I suggested it to a few people, and Chris Evans and Rob Holdstock took it up, sold it to Jane Johnson at Unwin, and it became *Other Edens*. Then, early in '88, I met Martin Fletcher, who was an editor with Sphere at that time, and we got talking. He said he'd like to do an anthology similar to *Other Edens*, and when I told him that had been my idea, he suggested I edit a new series. I agreed, because it's always a good idea to say yes to an editor, and that's how the *Zeniths* came about."

didn't want to trade on that title alone, which is why I'd been approaching people to continue with *Zenith*. As it turned out, I didn't feel any different doing *New Worlds* than when I was doing *Zenith*. I still don't see it as being different. I don't think I'm carrying any '60s or '70s baggage." But there is a mystique attached to the title. "Oh yeah, definitely. When I told people we were re-launching *New Worlds* they'd go, 'Wow!' Whereas if I'd said *Zenith 3* was coming out they would have said, 'Oh. Good.' *New Worlds* definitely has some kudos. I'd still like to have a story in it myself! I suppose editing it's nearly as good.

"Anyway, we did the four with Gollancz. But Gollancz got bought by Cassell and all the financial criteria changed. They fulfilled the four-book contract, but the series hasn't done as well as they'd hoped. I've been trying to find someone else to take it on, but no one seems interested. You can see their point. Anthologies don't sell. Mind you, if you're Martin Harry Greenberg you can sell hundreds of anthologies in the States. Pete Crowther can sell horror anthologies over here; so can Steve Jones. I wonder to what extent the idea that anthologies don't sell is a self-fulfilling prophecy; so they don't get commissioned, or pushed very hard when they are published. And because they don't sell very well, the contributors tend to get rip-off money. There are so many reprint anthologies because they're cheaper to do. But that means there are fewer original anthologies, and fewer markets for short stories from new writers.

"In a way, it was harder editing the *Orbit Yearbook* than the *Zeniths*. I had a lot of trouble finding 12 good stories a year, ones I would count as good. At least with *Zenith* if there was something I didn't like in a story I could talk to the author and maybe get them to change it. You can't do that with a reprint anthology."

In his introductions to *New Worlds 3* and *4*, Garnett rails against the standardization he believes is creeping into the publishing industry, and the resulting blandness. The same kind of short-termism evident in the rest of British industry, he says, is beginning to afflict the book business. "What I said about publishing in those *New Worlds* introductions was exaggerated to make a point. But I've been around for a long time and can see the way things are going. It's a cliché to talk about accountants running publishing, because they *are* businesses. They're there to make money. Publishers bring out 20 books a month even though they know only two, three or four of them will make any money. The reason they publish the others is to give themselves a job. They can't just bring out a couple of titles a month; they'd have nothing to do. The difference is that in the old days it could be balanced. The money they made on books that sold well would help pay for newer writers. That doesn't happen so much now."

At the time of our conversation, Martin Amis was in the news for seeking half a million pounds as an advance on his new novel, and HarperCollins had agreed to pay it. In a way, it seemed to encapsulate

Garnett's view of the industry. "Yes, any publisher paying him that kind of money has less for authors trying to break in. But there again, publishers are always after the main chance. They're always thinking that if they can throw a lot of money at something they can buy quality; they can buy into a bestseller. Rather than develop a new author, which takes too long, they're tending to poach them, the way record companies do with bands. You can sort of understand why they do it; they can't afford to develop an author over the years. But authors, particularly new authors, can be treated like miners in the Third World. They're there to be exploited. Publishers treat them like slaves because there'll always be another one along. You've got to stand up to that."

Stargonauts didn't go for quite as large an advance as the Amis. How did the trilogy come about? "Colin Murray [editor of the Orbit imprint] rang and said, 'Come on, Garnett, it's about time you wrote some science fiction again.' So I sent him the outlines and he offered me a three-book deal. Okay, here's confession time: *Stargonauts* is meant to be a new version of *The Starseekers*, my second novel, which I wrote when I was 20 or 21. I thought that was a pretty good book, and I've always wanted to write a sequel or two. I explained this to Colin and he said okay. He knew better than I did that it wouldn't be just a quick re-write.

"In the end, I hardly looked at *Starseekers* at all when I was writing *Stargonauts*. The main character, William Ewart, is still there; a couple of the other characters are still there, and so is the same basic premise. After that it went in a completely different direction. Which is only right. It would have been like franchising myself to have simply re-written *Starseekers*. The new characters in the next volume include a policeman from Las Vegas who's cryogenically frozen and zapped into the 22nd century. He's frozen in June 1968, because that's the date I started writing *The Starseekers*. He and another character, a female character, go searching the galaxy for William Ewart. I choose Las Vegas as his place of origin because when I was in America a few years ago I found a copy of *Mirror in the Sky* in a second-hand bookshop in California, and it was from a public library in Nevada. I thought, 'Shit, this has been knocking around for 21 years and it's still in quite good condition.' I bought it to take it off the market! And Las Vegas is such an unreal place that I used it as part of the space pirate's base, Hideaway, in *Stargonauts*."

There's been a real boom in humorous sf and fantasy in recent years. "Yeah, there has. At the first Milford [writers' workshop] I went to, in 1976, I wrote a short comedy fantasy story called 'Warlord of Earth.' It went down very well and people said I should expand it into a novel. I wrote a few chapters, and an outline, and started sending it around publishers. Everyone turned it down. Basically, they said, 'There's no market for comedy fantasy. No one's going to publish this kind of thing.' Now, nearly 20 years later, I might try again.

"I read my first Pratchett, *Men at Arms*, last year, incidentally, and I really, really enjoyed

it. But I thought, 'Well, I've read one, I don't really need to read another.' It was very good, but in a way I'd been avoiding reading it because I'm still thinking that one day I'm going to write 'Warlord of Earth' as a novel and didn't want to be influenced by Pratchett. But of course what I'll do would be completely different from what he does. His novels aren't really fantasy at all. They're *comedy* novels that happen to be set in a fantasy world.

"The thing is, I'm not 'trying' to be funny in the *Stargonauts* trilogy. I believe that in good comedy the jokes come out of the characters. They shouldn't be constantly wise-cracking all the time. My favourite TV programmes and films are comedies, and I was watching *Bilko* yesterday; an episode made in 1956, and it's just so good. And the characters don't really make jokes, it all comes out of what they are and what they do, and the way they interact. This kind of humour comes out of character, not out of jokes, and that's what I've tried to do in *Stargonauts*, and in the second volume, *Galactic Outlaws*.

"There are a lot of comedy books around, particularly in sf and fantasy, written for people without a sense of humour *by* people without a sense of humour. Things full of puns and idiot characters with daft names, and aimed at people of restricted humorous ability. I don't know why I'm trying to be polite about this."

The protagonist in *Stargonauts*, media billionaire William Ewart, conforms to a right-wing tradition in American sf — the lone capitalist hero. I wondered to what extent Garnett was parodying the genre in this respect. "It never occurred to me! I suppose it isn't a deliberate parody, it's just that *everyone* who went out into space in the old days of sf built their own spaceship and had to be a capitalist. When I talked to Colin about the idea — bearing in mind that Orbit used to be part of the Robert Maxwell empire which all fell apart — he said, 'You realize Ewart is a kind of Maxwell character, don't you?'"

I had him down as based on Howard Hughes or Rupert Murdoch. "Powerful media types, yeah. I often wonder how powerful these people really are. You know, *The Guardian* always complains about how powerful Murdoch is, but is that because *The Guardian* wants to pretend that the media *are* powerful? Whereas the really powerful people are hidden. We don't know who the hell they are. Like in that Brunner story, 'The Totally Rich'."

But the really important question is why, on the cover of *Stargonauts*, Ewart looks like Raymond Burr. "I thought he looked like Clive James. Someone else thought he looked like Andrew Neil."

Similar wig. "Yeah."

Stargonauts is a paperback original from Orbit (£4.99). *New Worlds* volumes 1-4 are published by Gollancz at various prices ranging from £4.99 to £6.99 each.

The Great Dream was a wild success, far beyond anyone's imagining. Afterwards, no one recalled exactly who had chosen Monument Valley for its staging. The organizers claimed most of the credit, and the sponsors what was left of the credit. No one mentioned Casper Trestle. Trestle had disappeared again.

So had much else.



Trestle was always disappearing. Three years earlier, he had been wandering in Rajasthan. In that bleak and beautiful territory, where once deer had lain down with rajahs, he came through a rainless area where the land was denuded of trees and animals; here, huts were collapsing and the people were dying of drought. Men, aged at 30, stood motionless as scarecrows of bone, watching with sick disinterest as Casper trudged by; but Casper was accustomed to disinterest. Only termites flourished, termites and the scavenger birds wheeling overhead.

Afflicted by the parched land, Casper found his way through to a mountainous area where miraculously trees still grew, and rivers flowed. He continued onwards, where the rugged countryside began to rise to meet the distant grandeur of the Himalayas. Plants blossomed with pendulous mauve and pink flowers like Victorian lampshades. There he met the mysterious Leigh, Leigh Tireno. Leigh was watching goats and lounging on a rock under the dappled shade of a baobab, while the bees made a low song that seemed to fill the little valley with sleep.

"Hi," Casper said.

"Likewise," Leigh said. He lay back on his rock, one hand stretched above his forehead shading his eyes, which were as brown as fresh honey. The nearest goat was a cloudy white like milk, and carried a little battered bell about its neck. The bell clattered in B Flat as the animal rubbed its haunches against Leigh's rock.

That was all that was said. It was a hot day.

But that night, Casper dreamed a delicious dream. He found a magic guava fruit and took it into his hand. The fruit opened for him and he plunged his face into it, seeking with his tongue, sucking the seeds into his mouth, swallowing them.

Casper found a place to doss in Kamedredi. Casper was lost, really a lost urchin, snub-nosed, pasty of face, with hair growing out in straggly fashion from a neglected crewcut. Although he had never learnt manners, he maintained the docility of the defeated. And he instinctively liked Kamedredi. It was a humble version of paradise. After a few days, he began to see it was orderly and sane.

Kamedredi was what some of the villagers called the Place of the Law. Others denied it had or needed a name: it was simply where they lived. Their houses stood on either side of a paved street which ended as it began, in earth. Other huts stood further up the hill, their decrease in size being more than a matter of perspective. A stream ran nearby, a little gossip flow of water which chased among boulders on its way to the valley. Water cresses grew in its side pools.

The children of Kamedredi were surprisingly few in number. They flew kites, wrestled with each other, caught small silver fish in the stream, tried to ride the placid goats.

The women of Kamedredi washed their clothes in the

Becoming the full butterfly



Brian Aldiss

stream, beating them mercilessly against rocks. The children bathed beside them, screaming with the delight of being children. Dogs roamed the area like down-and-outs, pausing to scratch or looking up at the kite-hawks which soared above the thatched roofs.

Not much work was done in Kamededi, at least as far as the men were concerned. They squatted together in their dhotis, smoking and talking, gesticulating with their slender brown arms. Where they usually were, by V.K. Bannerji's house, the ground was stained red by betel juice.

Mr Bannerji was a kind of headman of the village. Once a month, he and his two daughters walked down into the valley to trade. They went loaded with honeycombs and cheeses and returned with kerosine and sticking plaster. Casper stayed at Mr Bannerji's house, sleeping on a battered charpoy beneath the colourful clay figure of Shiva, god of destruction and personal salvation.

Casper was a dead-beat. He was now off drugs. All he wanted at present was to be left alone and sit in the sun. Every day he sat on an outcropping rock, looking down along the village street, past the lingam carved from stone, into the distance, shimmering with Indian heat. It suited him that he had found a place where men were not expected to do anything much. Boys tended goats, women fetched water.

At first, an old nervousness attended him. Wherever he walked, people smiled at him. He could not understand why.

Nor did he understand why there was no drought, no starvation in Kamededi.

He had a sort of hankering for Mr Bannerji's daughters, both of whom were beautiful. He relied on their cunctative services for food. They tittered at him behind their spread fingers, showing their white teeth. Since he could not decide which young lady he would most like to embrace upon his rope charpoy, he made no advances to either. It was easier that way.

His thoughts tended towards Leigh Tireno. When Casper got round to thinking about it, he told himself that a kind of magic hung over Kamededi. And over the bare-legged Leigh. He watched from his rock the bare-legged Leigh going about his day. Not that Leigh was much more active than anyone else; but occasionally he would climb up into the tree-clad heights above the village and disappear for several days. Or he would sit in the lotus position on his favourite boulder, holding the pose for hours at a time, eyes staring sightlessly ahead. In the evening, he would remove his dhoti and swim naked in one of the pools fed by the stream.

As it happened, Casper would take it into his head to stroll along by the pool where Leigh swam.

"Hi," he called as he passed.

"Likewise," replied Leigh, perfecting his breast stroke. Casper could not help noticing that Leigh had a white behind, and was otherwise burnt as dark as an Indian. The daughters of Mr Bannerji moulded with their slender fingers goat's cheeses as white as Leigh's behind. It was very mysterious and a little discomfiting.

Mr Bannerji had visited the outside world. Twice in his life he had been as far as Delhi. He was the only person in Kamededi who spoke any English, apart from Casper and Leigh. Casper picked up a few words of Urdu, mainly those to do with eating and drinking. He learned from Mr Bannerji that Leigh Tireno had lived for three years in the village. He came, said Mr Bannerji, from Europe, but was now of no nation. He was a magical person and must not be touched.

"You are not to be touching," repeated Mr Bannerji, studying Casper intently with his short-sighted eyes. "Nowhere."

The two young Bannerji ladies giggled and peeled back the skins of plantains in very slinky ways before inserting the tips into their red mouths.

A magical person. In what way could Leigh be magical?, Casper asked. Mr Bannerji wobbled his head wisely, but could not or would not explain.



The people who flocked to Monument Valley, who had booked seats on the top of mesas or stood with camcorders on the roofs of coaches, had some doubts about Leigh Tireno's magical properties. It was publicity that got to them. They had been inoculated by the hype from New York and California. They believed that Leigh was a messiah.

Or else they didn't care either way.

They went to Monument Valley because the notion of a sex change turned them on.

Or because the neighbours were going.

"Hell of a place to go," they said.



When the sun went down, darkness embraced Kamededi like an old friend, with that particular mountain darkness which is a rare variant of light. The lizards go in, the geckos come out. The night-jar trills of ancient romance. The huts and houses hold in their strawy palms the dizzy golden smell of kerosine lamps. There are roti smells too, matched with the scent of boiled rice teased with strands of curried goat. The perfumes of the night are warm and chill by turns, registering on the skin like moist fingertips. The tiny world of Kamededi becomes for an hour a place of sensuality, secret from the sun. Then everyone falls asleep: to exist in another world until cock crow.

In that hidden hour, Leigh came to Casper Trestle.

Casper could hardly speak. He was half-reclining on his charpoy, a hand supporting his untidy head. There stood Leigh looking down at him with a smile as enigmatic as the most abstruse Buddha.

"Hi," Casper said.

Leigh said, "Likewise."

Casper struggled into a sitting position. He clutched his toes and gazed up at his beautiful visitor, unable to produce a further word.

Without further preliminary, Leigh said, "You have been in the universe long enough to understand a little of its workings."

Supposing this to be a question, Casper nodded his head.

"You have been in this village long enough to understand a little of its workings." Pause. "So I shall tell you something about it."

This seemed to Casper very strange, despite the fact that his life had passed mainly surrounded by strange people.

"You mustn't be touched? Why not?"

When Leigh's mouth moved, it had its own kind of music, separate from the sounds it uttered. "Because I am a dream. I may be your dream. If you touch me, you may awaken from it. Then – then, where would you be?" He gave a tiny cold sound almost like a human laugh.

"Ummm," said Casper. "New Jersey, I guess..."

Whereupon Leigh continued with what he had intended to say. He said that the people in Kamededi and a few villages nearby were a special sort of Rajput people. They had a special story. They had been set apart from ordinary folk by a special dream. The dream had happened four centuries ago. It was still revered, and known as the Great Law Dream.

"As a man of Kamededi respects his father," said Leigh, "so he respects the Great Law Dream even more."

Four centuries ago in past time, a certain sadhu, a holy man, was dying in Kamededi. In the hours before his death, he dreamed a series of laws. These he was relating to his daughter when Death arrived, dressed in a deep shadow, to take him away to Vishnu. Because of her purity, the holy man's daughter had special powers, and was able to bargain with Death.

The holy man's spirit left him. Death stood over them both as the woman coaxed her dead father to speak, and to continue speaking until he had related to her all the laws of his dream. Then a vapour issued from his mouth. He had cried out. His lips had become sealed with the pale seal of Death. He was buried within the hour: yet even before the prayers were chanted and the body interred, it began to decompose. So the people knew a miracle has happened in their midst.

But the laws remained for the daughter to recite.

Her head changed to the head of an elephant. In this guise of wisdom, she summoned the entire village before her. All abased themselves and fasted for seven days while she recited to them the laws of the Great Law Dream.

The people had followed the laws of the Great Law Dream ever since.

The laws guided their conduct. The laws concerned worldly things, not spiritual for, if the worldly matters were properly observed, then the spiritual would follow.

The laws taught the people how to live contentedly within their families and peacefully with each other. The laws taught them to be kind to strangers. The laws taught them to despise worldly goods of which they had no need. The laws taught them how to survive.

Those survival laws had, of all the laws, been most rigorously followed for four centuries, ever since the sadhu was taken by Death. For instance, the laws spoke of breath and water. Breath, the spirit of human life, water the spirit of all life. They taught how to conserve water, and how a little should be set aside from human use every day, so much spared for animals, so much for plants and trees. The laws taught how to cook with the best conservation of fuel and rice, and how to eat healthily, and how to drink moderately and enjoyably.

Speaking of moderation, the laws declared that happiness often lay in the silence of human tongues. Happiness was important to health. Health was most important to women, who had charge of the family cooking pot.

The laws spoke of the dangers of women bearing too many children, and of too many mouths to be fed in consequence. They told of certain pebbles to be found in the bed of the river, which the women could insert into their yonis to prevent fertilization. The smoothness of the stones, brought down from the snows of the Himalayas, and their dimensions, were minutely described.

Nakedness was no crime; before the gods, all humans went naked.

Behaviour too was described. Two virtues, said the laws, made for human happiness, and should be inculcated even

into small children: self-abnegation and forgiveness.

"Love those near you and those distant," said the laws. "Then you will be able to love yourself. Love the gods. Never pretend to them, or you will deceive yourself." So much for the spiritual part. Instructions on the way to bake chapatis took up more time.

Finally, the Great Law Dream was clear about trees. Trees must be conserved. Goats must not eat of trees or saplings, or be permitted to eat the smallest seedling. No tree less than a hundred years old must be cut down for fuel or building material. Only the tops of trees, when they grew over six feet high, might be used for fuel or building material: in that way, Kamededi and surrounding villages would have shade and a good climate. Birds and beasts would survive which would otherwise perish. The countryside would not be denuded and become desert.

If the people looked to these laws of nature, then nature would look to them.

So spoke the sadhu in his hour of departure from this world.



As Leigh spoke concerning these matters, he seemed to become, as he claimed he was, a dream. His eyes became large, his eyelashes like the tips of thorn bushes, his simple face grave, his lips a musical instrument through which issued musics of wisdom.

He said that ever since the holy man's daughter gave forth the Great Law Dream through her blue elephant's head, the people of Kamededi had followed those precepts scrupulously. Nearby villages, having heard the laws, had not bothered with them. They had denuded their woods, eaten too greedily, begotten many children with greedy mouths. So the people of Kamededi lived, while less disciplined people perished, and passed away, and were forgotten on the stream of time.

"What about sex?", Casper asked.

And Leigh answered calmly, "Sex and reproduction are Shiva's gift. They are our fortification against decay. Like Shiva, they can also destroy." He gave Casper a smile of sorrowful beauty and left the Bannerji house, walking out lightly into the dark. The night-jar sang to him as he went his way. The night itself nestled on his slender shoulder.



"You want to promote an event where two crazy people sleep together?" The question was asked incredulously in a publicity office in New York. Fifth Avenue in the high thirties. SALE time again at Macey's.

"Are we talking hetero, gay, lesbian, or what here?"

"Have they figured out a new way of doing it? A shortcut or something?"

"Forget it, you can see people screwing back home every night, in the safety of your own apartment."

"They don't only screw, these two. They plan to have a very basic dream."

"Dream, did you say? You want us to rent out Monument Valley for some fucking queers to have a DREAM? Get to fuck out of here!"



Leigh was climbing from the pool, naked. Little rivulets of water ran from the watershed of his back down the length of his long legs. His pubic hair twinkled like a spider's web loaded with morning dew. Casper could hardly bear to look. He trembled, unable to make out what was wrong with him. When did he ever experience such desire?

Looking in the grass to see no leeches were about, Leigh folded himself onto a rock. He squeezed water from his hair with one hand. Sighing with contentment, he closed his eyes. He turned his faultless face up to the sun, as though to return its rays.

"Really, you are a mess, Casper. This place should help you to get better, to mend – to be at peace inwardly with yourself."

It was the first time he had spoken in this fashion.

"These dream laws," Casper said, to change the subject. "They're a lot of Indian hokum really, yep?"

"We all have a sense at the back of our minds that there was once a golden, primal time, when all was well with us – maybe in infancy."

"Not me."

"The Great Law Dream represents such a time for a whole community. You and I, my sad Casper, come from a culture where all – almost all – has been lost. Consumption instead of communication. Commercialism instead of contentment. Isn't that so?"

Standing on the spot, looking sulky and secretly contemplating Leigh's exposed body, Casper said, "I never had nothing to consume."

"But you want it. You're all grab at heart, Casper!" He sat up suddenly, lids still shielding his honeyed eyes. "Don't you remember, back home, how they ate, how everyone ate and yet hardly breathed? The breath of life! How there was this sentimental cult of childhood, yet all the while kids were neglected, beaten, taught only negatives?"

Casper nodded. "I sure remember that." He fingered the scar on his shoulder.

"People don't know themselves back there, Casper. They cannot take a deep breath and know themselves. Knowledge they have – facts. Wisdom, not so. Most are hung up on sex. Women are trapped in male bodies, thousands of gay men long to be hetero... Humanity has fallen into a bad dream, rejecting spirituality, clinging to self – to lowly biological origins."

He opened his eyes then, to scrutinize Casper. In the branches of the banyan nearby, pigeons cooed as if in mockery.

"I'm not so freaked out as I was." Casper found nothing else to say.

"I came here to develop what was in me... If you travel far enough, you discover what you originally were."

"That's true. Like I've put on a bit of weight."

Leigh appeared to ignore the remark. "As our breathing is automatic, so there are archetypes, I've come to believe, which guide our behaviour, if we allow them. A kind of automatic response."

"This is over my head, Leigh. Sorry. Talk sense, will you?"

The gentle smile. "You do understand. You do understand, and reject what is unfamiliar. Try thinking of archetypes as master – and mistress – figures, such as you encounter in fairy tales, 'The Beauty and the Beast,' for instance. Guiding our behaviour like very basic programming in a computer."

"Grow up, Leigh! Fairy tales!"

"Archetypes have been set at nothing in our culture. So

they're at war with our superficiality. We need them. Archetypes reach upwards to the rarefied heights of great music. And down into the soil of our being, down to the obscure realms beyond language, where only our dreaming selves can reach them."

Casper scratched his crutch. He was embarrassed at being talked to as if he was an intelligent man. It had happened so rarely.

"I never heard of archetypes."

"But you meet them in your sleep – those personages who are you, yet not you. The strangers you are familiar with."

He scratched his chin instead of his crutch. "You think dreams are that important?"

Leigh's was a gentle laugh, not as mocking as the doves'. "This village is proof of it. If only... if only there were some way you and I could dream a Great Law Dream together. For the benefit of all humanity."

"Sleep together, you mean? Hey! You won't allow that! You're tabu."

"Perhaps only to a carnal touch..." He slid down and confronted Casper face to face. "Casper, try! Save yourself. Release yourself. Let everything be changed. It's not impossible. It's easier than you think. Don't cling to chrysalis state – be the full butterfly!"



Casper Trestle took dried meat and fruit and climbed up into the mountains above Kameredi. There he remained and thought and experienced what some would call visions.

Some days, he fasted. Then it seemed to him that someone walked beside him in the forest. Someone wiser than he. Someone he knew intimately yet was unable to recognize. His thoughts that were not thoughts streamed from him like water.

He saw himself in a still pool. His hair grew to his shoulders and he went barefoot.

This is what he said to himself, scooping together fragments of reflection in the cloth of his mind:

"He's so beautiful. He must be Truth itself. Me, I'm a sham. I've messed up my entire life. I had it messed up for me. No, at last I must grab a slice of the blame. That way, I take control. I won't enjoy being a victim. Not no more. I'm going to change. I too can be beautiful, someone else's dream..."

"I've been in the wrong dream. The stupid indulgent dream of the time. The abject dream of wealth beyond dreams. Spiritual destitution.

"Something's happened to me. From today, from now, I will be different.

"Okay, I'm going crackers, but I will be different. I will change. Already I am changing. I'm becoming the full butterfly."

After a few nights, when the new moon rose, he went to look at his reflection again. For the first time he saw – though in tatters – beauty. He wrapped his arms round himself. In the pool, from tiny throats, frogs cried out that there was no night.

He danced by the pool. "Change, you froggies!", he called. "If I can do it, anyone can do it." They had done it.

Somewhere distantly, when the moon sank into the welcoming maw of the mountains, he heard dismal roaring, as if creatures fought to the death in desolate swamps.



From the hoarse throats of machines, diesel fumes spewed. Genman Timber PLC was getting into action for another day. Guys in hard hats and jeans issued from the canteen. They tossed their cigarette butts into the mud, heading for their tractors and chain saws. The previous day they had cleared four square kilometres of forest in the mountain some miles above Kamededi.

The Genman camp was a half-formed circle of portable cabins. Generators roared, pumping electricity and air-conditioning round the site. Immense mobile cranes, brought to this remote area at great expense, loaded felled trees onto a string of lorries.

There were many more trees to go. The trees stood silent, awaiting the bite of metal teeth. In times to come, far from the Himalayas, they would form elements in furniture sold from showrooms in wasteland outside Rouen or Atlanta or Munich or Madrid. Or they would become crates containing oranges from Tel-Aviv, grapes from Cape province, tea from Guanzou. They would form scaffolding on high-rises in Osaka, Beijing, Budapest, Manila. Or fake tourist figurines sold in Bali, Berlin, London, Aberdeen, Buenos Aires.

It was early yet at the Genman site. The sun came grumbling up into layers of mist. Loudspeakers played versions of rock over the area. Overseers were cursing. Men were tense as they gunned their engines into life, or joked to postpone the moment when they had to exert themselves in the forests.

Bloated fuel carriers started up. Genman bulldozers turned like animals in pain on their caterpillar tracks, to throw up muck as they headed for their designated tasks.

The whole camp was a sea of mud.

Soon the trees would come crashing down, exposing ancient lateritic soils. And someone would be making a profit, back in Calcutta, California, Japan, Honolulu, Adelaide, England, Bermuda, Bombay, Zimbabwe, you name it...

Action started. Then the rain began, blowing ahead in full sail from the south-west.

"Shit," said the men, but carried on. They had their bonuses to think of.



The new Casper slept. And had a terrible dream. It was like no other dream. As life is like a dream, this dream was like life.

His brain burned with it. He rose before dawn and stumbled through the aisles of the forest. His path lay downward. For two days and nights he travelled without food. He saw many old palaces sinking down into the mud, like great illuminated liners into an arctic sea. He saw things running and gigantic lizards giving birth. Eyes of amber, eyes of azure, breasts of bronze, adorned his track. So he returned to Kamededi and found it all despoiled.

What had been a harmonious village, with people and animals living together – he knew now how rare and precious it was – was no more. All had gone. Men and women, animals, hens, buildings, the little stream – all gone.

It was as if Kamededi had never been.

The rains had not fallen on Kamededi. The rains had fallen at higher altitudes. With the forests fallen, upper streams had overflowed. Tides of mud flowed downhill. Before that chilly lavaflo, everything gave way.

The people of Kamededi had been unprepared. The Great Law Dream had said nothing of this inundation. They were carried away, breathing dirt, drowned, submerged, finished.

And Casper saw himself walking over the desecrated ground, looking at the bodies growing like uncouth tubers from the sticky mess. He saw himself fall in a swoon to the ground.



In Monument Valley, gigantic stadia were being built at top speed. Bookings were being taken for seats which as yet were not fabricated. Emergency roads were being built. Notices, signs, public restrooms, were going up. Washington was being concerned. All kinds of large-scale scams were being set in motion. The League of Indigenous American Peoples was holding protest meetings.

A well-known Italian artist was wrapping up one of the mesas in pale blue plastic.



When Casper awoke, all knowledge seemed to have left him. He looked about. The room was dark. Everything was obscure, except for Leigh Tirenio. Leigh stood by the charpoy, seeming to glow.

"Hi," Casper whispered.

"Likewise," said Leigh. They gazed upon each other as if upon summer landscapes choked with corn.

"Er, how about sex?" Casper asked.

"Our fortification against decay."

Casper lay back, wondering what had happened. As if reading his thought, Leigh said, "We knew you were in the mountains. I knew you were having a strong and terrible dream. I came with four women. They carried you back here. You are safe."

"Safe!" Casper screamed. Suddenly his mind was clear. He staggered from the bed and made for the door. He was in Mr Bannerji's house and it was not destroyed, and Mr Bannerji's daughters lived.

Outside, the sun reigned over its peaceful village. Hens strutted between buildings. Children played with a puppy, men spat betel juice, women stood statuesque by the dhobi place.

Mud did not exist.

No corpses tried to swim down a choked street.

"Leigh, I had a dream as real as life itself. As life is a dream, so my dream was life. I must tell Mr Bannerji. It is a warning. Everyone must take their livestock and move to a safer place to live. But will they believe me?"



A month passed away for ever before they found a new place. It was three days' journey from the old place, facing south from the top of a fertile valley. The women complained at its steepness. But here it would be safe. There was water and shade. Trees grew. Mr Bannerji and others went into a town and traded livestock for cement. They rebuilt Kamededi in the new place. The women complained at the depth of the new watercourse. Goats ate the cement and got sick.

An ancient hag with a diamond at her nostril recited the Great Law Dream for all to hear, one evening when the stars

resembled more diamonds and a moon above the new Kamededi swelled and became pregnant with light. Slowly the new place became their familiar Kamededi. Small boys with a dog sent to inspect the old place returned and reported it destroyed by a great mud flow, as if the earth had regurgitated itself.

Casper was embraced by all. He had dreamed truthfully. The villagers celebrated their escape from death. The village enjoyed 24 hours of drink and rejoicing, during which time Casper lay with both of the Bannerji young ladies, his limbs entwined with theirs, his warmth mingled with theirs, his juices with theirs.

In their yonis the ladies had placed smooth stones, as decreed in the laws. Casper kept the stones afterwards, as souvenirs, as trophies, as sacred memorials of blessed events.



Leigh Tirenó disappeared. Nobody knew his whereabouts. He was gone so long that even Casper found he could live without him.

After another moon had waxed and waned, Leigh returned. His hair had grown long, and was tied by ribbon over one shoulder. He had decorated his face. His lips were reddened. He wore a sari. Under the sari, breasts swelled.

"Hi," Leigh said.

"Likewise," said Casper, holding out his arms. "Life in New Kamededi is made new. All's changed. I've changed. It's the full butterfly. And you look more beautiful than ever."

"I've changed. I am a woman. That is the discovery I had to make. I merely dreamed I was a man. It was the wrong dream for me, and I have at last awakened from it."

To Casper's surprise, he was not as surprised as he might have been. He was becoming accustomed to the miraculous in life.

"You have a yoni?"

Leigh lifted his – her – sari and demonstrated. She had a yoni, ripe as guavas.

"It's beautiful. How about sex now?"

"It's a fortification against decay. Shiva's gift. It can also destroy." She smiled. Her voice was softer than before. "As I have told you. Be patient."

"What became of your lingam? Did it drop off?"

"It crawled away into the undergrowth. In the forest, I menstruated for the first time. The moon was full. Where the blood fell, there a guava tree grew."

"If I found the tree and ate of its fruit...?"

He tried to touch her but she backed away. "Casper, forget your little private business for a while. If you have really changed, you can look beyond your personal horizons to something wider, grander."

Casper felt ashamed. He dropped his gaze to the floor, where ants crawled, as they had done even before the gods awoke and painted their faces blue.

"I'm sorry. Instruct me. Be my sadhu."

She arranged herself among the ants in the lotus position. "The logging in the hills. It is based more on greed than necessity. It needs to stop. Not just the logging, but all its stands for in the mercenary world. Contempt for the dignity of nature."

It sounded like a tall order to Casper. But when he complained, Leigh coolly said that logging was very minor and

nature was vast. "We must dream together."

"How do you manage that?"

"A powerful dream, in order to change more than little Kamededi, more than ourselves. A healing dream, together. As we have dreamed separately and succeeded. As all men and women dream separately – always separately. But we will dream together."

"Touching?"

She smiled. "You still must change. Change is a continuity. There are no comfort stations on the road to perfection."

Within his breast, his heart jumped for fear and hope at the wonderful words. "The things you understand... I worship you."

"One day, I may worship you."



Special units of the National Guard had been drafted in to control the crowds. Half of Utah and Arizona was cordoned off by razor wire. Counter-insurgency posts had been established; Washington was wary of dream-makers. Tanks, trucks, armed personnel carriers, patrolled everywhere. Special elevated ways had been erected. Armed police bikers roared along them, licensed to fire down on the crowds if trouble was brewing. Heligunships circled overhead, cracking the eardrums of Monument Valley with spiteful noise.

They supervised a sprawling site bearing the hallmarks of an interior landscape of manic depression.

Someone said it. "Seems like they are shooting the war movie to end all war movies."

Private automobiles had been banned. They were corralled in huge parks as far north as Blanding, Utah; at Shiprock, New Mexico, in the east; and at Tuba City, Arizona, to the south. The Hopis and Navajos were making a killing. A slew of cafés, bars, restaurants had sprung up from nowhere. Along authorized routes, lurid entertainments of various kinds sprang forth like paintboxes bursting. Many carried giant effigies of Leigh Tirenó, looking at her best, above booths with such come-ons as "Change Your Sex By Hypnosis – PAINLESS!" No one mentioned Casper Trestle.

Pedestrian lanes and coach lanes were kept apart.



How the good folk jostled on their way to the spectacle! It was mighty hot there, in the crowded desolation; sweat rose like a mist, an illness above heaving shoulders. Bacteria were having a great time. Countless city people, unaccustomed to walking more than a block, found the quarter mile from a Park-n'-Ride bus drop more than they could take, and collapsed into one of the many field ambulance units. Rest was charged at \$25 an hour. Some walked on singing or sobbing, according to taste. Pickpockets moved among the crowd, elbowing hot gossellers of many kinds. The preachers preached their tunes of damnation. It was not difficult for the unprivileged, as blisters formed on their heels, to believe that the end of the world was nigh – or at least heaving into sight from the seas of misery, a kind of Jaws from the nether regions – or that the whole universe might sizzle down into a little white dot, like when you turned off the TV at two in the sullen Bronx morning. Could be, ending was best. Maybe with this possibility in mind, a fair percentage of the adults stomped along like cattle, pressing fast food to their mouths or slurping sweet liquids into their faces. A fat woman,

hemmed in by heated bodies, was hit simultaneously by congestion and digestion; her cries as she cartwheeled among the marching legs were drowned by sporadic ghetto music from a multitude of receivers. Every orifice was stuffed. It was the law. At least no one was smoking. Varieties of bobbing caps amid the throng indicated children, big and little hobledehoys fighting to get through first, yelling, screaming, gobbling popcorn as they went. Underfoot, all kinds of coloured cartons and wrappers of non-biodegradable material were trampled in the dust, along with the tumbling bodies, the gobs of pink gum, the discarded items of clothing, the ejected tampons, the lost soles. It was a real media event, as much a crowd-puller as the World Series.



Casper had set the whole vast scheme in motion. Now he was responsible only for himself and Leigh. Human nature was beyond his control. He stood in the middle of a mile-wide arena where John Wayne had once ridden hell-for-leather. Mr V.K. Bannerji was with him, terrified by the sheer blast of public attention.

"Vill it vork?", he asked Casper. "Otherwise ve shall have violence."

But at six in the evening, when the shadows of the giant mesas grew like long blunt black teeth over the land, a bell rang and silence fell. A slight breeze arose, mitigating the heat, cooling many a feverish armpit. The pale blue plastic in which one of the mesas had been wrapped crackled slightly. Otherwise all was at last still – still as it had been in the millennia before the human race existed.



A king-size bed stood raised in the middle of the arena. Leigh waited by the side of the bed. She removed her clothes without coquetry, turning about once in a full circle, so that all could see she was now a woman. She climbed into the bed.

Casper removed his clothes, also turned about to demonstrate that he was a man, and climbed in beside Leigh. He touched her.

They put their arms about each other and fell asleep.

Gently, music arose from the assembled Boston Pops Orchestra. Tchaikovsky's waltz from *The Sleeping Beauty*. The organizers felt this composer was particularly appropriate on this occasion. In the million strong audience, women wept, kids threw up as quietly as possible. Before their television screens all round the world, people were weeping and throwing up into plastic bowls.

It was an ancient dream they dreamed, welling from the brain's ancient core. The beings that paraded across a primal tapestry of fields wore stiff antique garb. In these personages was vested an untroubled power over human behaviour. An untroubled archetypal power.

Before sex was life, aspiring upwards like spring water. After the advent of sexual reproduction came consciousness. Before consciousness dawned, dreams prevailed. Such dreams form the language of the archetypes.

In the espousal of a machine civilization, those ancient personages had been neglected, despised. Hero, warrior, matron, maiden true, wizard, mother, wise man too – finally their paths were bent to sew in human lives dissent. In dissarray a billion lives were spent: war, rape, mental torment, dismay... But LeighCas in the

tongue of dream vowed to these forces to redeem the Time, asked in return – it seems – that male and female might be free of crime... to live in better dreams...



Casper struggled up through layers of blanketing sleep. He lay unsure of himself, or where he was. Much had transpired: that he knew: a shift in consciousness. The dark head of the woman Leigh lay on his breast. Opening his eyes, he saw that above him flared an expressionist sky, encompassing cinnamon and maroon banners of sunset waving at feverish rate from horizon to far horizon.

Prompted by deep instinct, he felt down between his legs. He dug into a furry nest and felt lips there. What they told him wordlessly was strange and new. He wondered for a while if, soggy from the miracle sleep, he was feeling her by mistake. Gently, he stirred her away from his breast... his breasts... *her* breasts...

When Leigh opened her eyes and looked honey-coloured at Casper, her gaze was remote. Slowly, her lips curved into a smile.

"Likewise," she remarked, slipping a finger into Casper's yoni.

"How about a fortification against decay?" she asked.



The multitudes were leaving the auditorium. The aircraft were heading like eagles back to their nests. The tanks were pulling back. The Italian artist was unwrapping his mesa. Imagining he heard tree-cutting machines falling silent in distant forests, Mr Bannerji sat on the side of the bed, to cover his short-sighted eyes and weep for joy – the joy that survives in the midst of sorrow.

Immersed in their thoughts, the short-sighted multitudes went away. The different dream was taking effect. No one jostled. Something in their unity of posture, the bent shoulders, the bowed heads, was reminiscent of figures in an ancient frieze.

Here or there, a cheek, an eyeball, a bald head, reflected back the imperial colours of the sky, arbitrary yellows denoting happiness or pain, red meaning fire or passion, the blues of nullity or reflection. Nothing remained but land and sky – forever at odds, forever a unity. The mesas were standing up into the velvet, ancient citadels built without hands to commemorate distant time.

Although the multitude was silent as it departed, its multiple jaws not moving, a kind of murmur rose from its ranks.

The still sad music of humanity.

The day's death flew its colours, increasingly sombre. It was sunset: the dawn of a new age.



Brian Aldiss's previous stories for *Interzone* are "The Gods in Flight" (issue 9), "A Life of Matter and Death" (issue 38), "Softly – As in an Evening Sunrise" (issue 62), the extremely controversial "Horse Meat" (issue 65) and "The Monster of Everyday Life" (issue 80). His most recent novel is the well-received *Somewhere East of Life* (reviewed by James Lovegrove in *IZ* 90). Brian celebrates his 70th birthday later this year, with a collection of essays due from Liverpool University Press, a volume of poems from Sinclair-Stevenson, a short-story collection from HarperCollins, and perhaps more.

Don't forget the 6th of June – when the Royal Mail (hypnotized by Mr Pringle's January editorial) do the decent thing and issue H. G. Wells stamps for the centenary of *The Time Machine*. Sf entrepreneurs will no doubt buy huge stocks to sell to postcard-happy US fans visiting Britain for Glasgow's World SF Convention in August...

THE MACABRE ONES

Harlan Ellison features in a trailer for a US *Penthouse* which was to run an article about the "dark side" of Internet. "Writer Harlan Ellison, one of America's most popular and prestigious authors, who found himself electronically pilloried for no reason, summed up one view of computer bulletin boards: 'A breeding ground for bullies ... who would not dare to practice their hooligan ways were it not for an environment devoid of civility, courtesy, and the common proprieties which govern how human beings should behave toward one another.'" The net's anarchic abuses of free speech must be galling indeed to authors who would never dream of using the platform of their own fame to denigrate others.

Newt Gingrich the US politician is writing an alternative-history World War II novel, with sf author William R. Forstchen. Actually it seems a three-way collaboration, with James Baen the publisher/editor putting in bits of his own: a Baen passage about "goofy" young Lt. George Bush caused some stir when the draft was leaked, and is to be removed... Meanwhile in Britain, NEL will be interested in *1945* (the provisional title) and its novel idea of Hitler going into a coma following a 1941 air crash, leaving him unable to declare war on the USA after the Pearl Harbor attack. In 1979 NEL published *The Moscow Option*, an alternative-history World War II novel by David Downing whose back cover reads: "August 1941. Hitler lies in a deep coma after an air crash...."

Simon R. Green, self-confessed rising star of British sf and fantasy, made the error of enjoying a heavy meal immediately before a spellbinding talk delivered by Graham Joyce. The room was dark and cosy, the talk hypnotically compelling, and by and by Mr Green was jerked upright (along with the entire audience) by a stentorian Joycean bellow of "WAKE UP, GREEN, YOU BASTARD!" This may be kinder than Brian Stableford's approach, which is to direct lengthy, devastating sarcasms at the sleeper (oh all right, me) without raising his voice....

George Hay, onlie begetter of the SF Foundation, was the victim of a hit-and-run driver in November; he suffered concussion and serious injuries including multiple fracture of one leg, requiring an operation. Nevertheless he was soon in good spirits, but needed to spend some time recovering in hospital. This column refuses to credit the persistent rumour that George was treated at length for delirium until medical staff realized he was telling them about the SF Foundation.

Ansible LINK



David Langford

Cecelia Holland's long-standing complaints of being plagiarized in the William James "Sunfall" trilogy have finally led to action. The publishers Orbit insisted that James be given every opportunity to respond to accusations, which he failed to do by the deadline of 1 November 1994. The publishers then announced they were recalling the books and ceasing distribution. Holland still feels they acted badly – considering that the claimed mysterious parallels between James's trilogy and her *Until the Sun Falls* were pointed out to Orbit by independent parties as early as July 1993 – and is out for a formal apology and, perhaps, financial settlement.

Charles Platt, our forthcoming guest editor, reassures us all after hearing of controversy over the new *Interzone* design: "I haven't seen it yet. Rest assured, my design will be far more radical, disconcerting, and unpleasant to read."

Deborah Williams (née Beale), erstwhile Mistress of sf at Millennium, married Tad Williams on 29 October amid the ecclesiastical splendours of Finsbury Registry Office. Charon Wood, also late of Millennium, was maid of honour. In Spring the newlyweds are off to spend at least a couple of years in the USA, partly so that Tad Williams can be reunited with his ancient pet dog for its final days.

INFINITELY IMPROBABLE

Copywrongs. Sf artist David A. Hardy was less than delighted when six of his paintings were released for "trading cards" publication by the US magazine *Starlog*, which neglected to ask permission or offer payment. His US lawyers have been told to sue for copyright infringement. Norman Jacobs of *Starlog* expressed annoyance that ungrateful artists should object on such piffling grounds to his sincere promotion of sf art.... Hardy writes: "15 artists are involved (not all of whom are suing), including John Berkey, Robert McCall, Rick Sternbach, David Mattingly and Joe Bergeron. By all means mention it: Norman Jacobs told me, 'Publicity won't hurt ME!'"

World Fantasy Awards. NOVEL Lewis Shiner, *Glimpses*. NOVELLA Terry Lamsley, "Under the Crust." SHORT Fred Chappell, "The Lodger." ANTHOLOGY *Full Spectrum 4*. COLLECTION Ramsey Campbell, *Alone With The Horrors*. ARTIST Alan Clarke & J. K. Potter (tie). SPECIAL AWARDS: PROFESSIONAL Underwood-Miller, for publishing; NON-PROFESSIONAL Marc Michaud, for Necronomicon Press. LIFE ACHIEVEMENT Jack Williamson.

New Worlds 4 was launched by Gollancz in a blaze of secrecy, with only editor David Garnett able to reveal that the party invitations (mentioning a horror novel but not *New Worlds*) in fact contained this hidden agenda. Nevertheless the usual suspects enjoyed far too much wine in, for some arcane reason, the Murder One bookshop's romance section ... where Garry Kilworth seemed curiously at home.

Robert Bloch Memorial Award. This is self-explanatory. Initial funds were raised at the 1994 Bouchercon, the crime/mystery equivalent of the World SF Convention: presumably any prize will be for that genre. It's likely that, as with the Philip K. Dick sf award, it will be given by an expert panel to "best paperback original."

Foodie Corner. The effete-ness of reviewing in *Interzone* and other jejune mother-country publications is pointed up by Meredith Sorensen's feisty performance in *Australian Book Review*. She first commands that the children's picture book under discussion be torn to shreds. "The males of the party, having consumed enormous amounts of something smelly and bubbly, must then piss on the remains. The females ... must then sauté the sodden shreds in a liberal amount of oil until golden brown." Serves four.

Correction. I'm glad to admit that I was misinformed about one aspect of Keith Roberts's medical sufferings. He does *not* have any visual trouble (my apologies for reporting this) and seems in good literary form, able to write letters as powerfully and crushingly angry as legend credits him with...

I expect we all have our moments of apocalyptic gloom, but it's increasingly easy to feel science fiction in the cinema has reached the stage the western, war movie and musical had 20 years ago: hobbled with an unspoken reputation as an old, worn-out, reactionary genre, its conventions exhausted, its myths depleted by overfishing. With the promise of sf's own *Heaven's Gate* on the way in *Waterworld*, it's more and more a surprise to see proper sf movies – traditional space, future and technology movies, as opposed to comics, monster and supernatural stuff, all of which are doing deplorably nicely – get made at all; and even more of a surprise when they do well. But here is **Stargate**, an unlikely movie in every possible sense, from the still more unlikely defender of the faith Roland Emmerich.

It would be understating big-time to say Emmerich isn't taken terribly seriously as an sf movie *auteur*. Despite a proven competence for big-screen spectacle and action, his material tends to be cheerfully dismissed as goofy patchworks of bits from other movies (as, of course, are pretty much everyone else's), with even more than the usual disregard for reason, consistency and plausibility. But he's actually a rather interesting and peculiar figure. For one thing, Emmerich is the only filmmaker regularly producing big-budget, Hollywood-grade, internationally-profitable sf spectacles out of Europe. Of his four sf pictures to date, only *Universal Soldier* was bankrolled in dollars; *Stargate*, like *Making Contact* and *Moon 44*

before it, was entirely Euro-financed. Still more remarkably, and perhaps precisely because he's a comparative outsider in the Hollywood system, he's unique in his consistent loyalty to mainstream genre-sf subjects, at a time when they seem under siege from the softer fantasy-film genres. And finally, and most resistant to easy explanation, his recent movies have outperformed all expectation – with the critically-derided *Stargate* in particular a seemingly inexplicable hit at the US box office, and British audiences (to judge from the cheers at the London preview) likely to jump the same way.

Since *Stargate* is by any standards an astoundingly silly film, I know what I'd like to believe here: that the secret of its success is Emmerich's shrewd exploitation of the enduring appeal of traditional sf images and narratives across all barriers of fashion. Behind the exquisitely preposterous Egyptians-from-outer-space storyline, which seems largely an excuse for the production designers to go 64 kinds of bonkers, *Stargate* is an old-style interplanetary romance of a kind endearingly familiar to genre readers since Edgar Rice Burroughs, but surprisingly little-tested on screen: a contemporary setting with instant access to interplanetary adventure now, delivering swashbuckling fun on exotic new worlds without any of that dreary voyaging through vacuum. *Stargate*'s judicious mix of ERB's Mars, 2001, *Gateway* and the complete works of Rider Haggard is a powerful cocktail of proven ingredients that,

by design or accident, happen to be sufficiently unfamiliar to the jaded 1990s palate that they can seem fresh, exotic, and delicious. Certainly it feels like a long time since the cinema has treated us to a really big, irony-free, gosh-oo experience of stepping through a portal in an alien artefact to swirling strings and choir aahs, and finding ourselves outside an alien pyramid under a three-mooned sky.

It's not entirely the fault of Emmerich, and his *Universal Soldier* writer Dean Devlin, that all this tingling promise of horizonless adventure is swiftly dissipated by a severely dodgy plot about Jimmy Spader replaying Desert Storm against Jaye Davidson's Dolby-voiced galactic psychopath, in which Kurt Russell's marines go into an interplanetary situation (in a strictly peacekeeping role) and end up inspiring the desert natives to rise in democratic revolt, eject their despotic looney overlord, and fall in love with western consumer goods and lifestyle. It's always a problem in this kind of scenario to come up with a plot that's as exciting as the setup, and what the rather leisurely shenanigans with the revolting natives lack in conceptual breakthrough is at least diligently made up in enthusiastic set pieces and camp space villainy.

If the translation of the alien hieroglyphs is so gabbled that it's over before you realize this is all the explanation you're going to get; if it's a bit of a letdown to go all that way just to find a bunch of buffaloes in rugs wandering round a Malian-empire

STARGATE: The landing party from Earth arrive at the slave camp on the planet Abydos.



MUTANT POPCORN

Nick Lowe



themepark; and if the action-packed finale is so packed with action that it's impossible to follow at all, then at least we get shovelfuls of sublime Egyptological bunkum, theriocephalic suits of space armour, fabulously goofy ornamental ray-lances, and ground-to-air combat with zooshing bat-wing fighters, while the oddly-cast Davidson gets to mince around saying things like "I created your civilization – now I will destroy it!", "You will prove that I am the one God by killing your companions!", and "Send the bomb to Earth now!"

Like the dastardly Ra himself, it's all so ancient as to verge on the mythic. It's like the joyous re-enactment of ritual to watch these amiable dullards stumble through a series of plot devices older than the pyramids; and as we snigger into our popcorn buckets, let's frankly admit that it's touching to be part of an audience lapping it up.

If *Stargate* is so old-fashioned it's radical, Peter Hyams' *Timecop* is so conventional it's

perverse. Hyams is arguably the nearest figure in mainstream Hollywood to a specialist trad-sf director, his cv including such worthy middleweight fare as *Capricorn One*, *Outland* and *2010*. But Hyams is much more of a shooter-for-hire than a serious maverick, and while it's nice to see *Timecop* carrying his fingerprint marks of jaundiced us-and-them political sideswipes, real authorship lies with Mike Richardson's scarily successful Dark Horse media empire, now busily turning comics into movies with all the money it originally made turning movies into comics. Unlike the same stable's runaway *Mask*, though, *Timecop* is a profoundly conservative concept, and seems if anything more so on film, relying heavily on the hard work done by the *Back to the Future* and *Terminator* series in equipping the mass audience with a basic shorthand of time-paradox rules and conventions.

Timecop doesn't duck the comparisons: the imagery of the time-travel process (driving fast cars through walls) alludes strongly to *BttF*, and casting Jean-Claude Van Damme as Max Walker (with not even a token explanation of his accent this time) actively solicits those happy memories of large Arnold — seasoned with the funky Flem's usual pleasingly pointless kickboxing stunts, complete with martial-arts editing and improbable drum-machine crunches. The main disappointment with *Timecop*, a perfectly competent and effective entertainment on its own terms, is that there's so very little here that hasn't been done better in not-too-distant memory. The one fresh ingredient (on film, at least), is the politicization of time travel by its incorporation as a covert arm of the US government, explicitly allegorical of "that bullshit Star Wars program" in its wilful confusion of defensive and stake-raising strategies, and its appropriation in intragovernmental games of political footy. The pursuit of Ron Silver's evil presidential campaign into near futures and parallel presents allows passing discussion of some

quite meaty live issues, if mainly on throwaway background newscasts – the regulation of campaign spending, anti-immigration policies, the Reaganomic revival. (Silver justifies buying the Presidency with funds diverted from history: "We need someone in the White House who can afford not to listen to the little men. When I'm in office it'll be like the 80s again – the top 10% will get richer, and the rest will labour so we can enjoy a better life.")

But in most respects the year 2004 is disappointingly imagined (with really dumb self-driving windowless cars) and dressed (by Syd Mead, whose futuristic designs haven't moved a lot with the times). Even the time-twister conventions aren't handled terribly well; the climax, in particular, is rather inelegantly plotted in terms of the genre givens, and has a look of having been rewritten a couple of times too many. And while it must have sounded a great idea to have two J-Cs wandering around in the dark taking out goons – it's DOUBLE the action! DOUBLE the thrills! – in practice you early on lose all count of the goons and all track of which bulging Belgian is which. Harmless stuff, with at least a show of political and historical wit to make up for the breezy shortage of narrative logic.

And so, by an antithesis chastely unexpressed, to the most completely unlikely sf movie of our times: first-time woman writer/director, budgetless, British and black. Ngozi Onwurah's **Welcome II the Terrordome** has been in the works so long you could be forgiven for assuming it had already been and gone; even the copyright credit says 1993, since when the other products of what a year or two back was being ingeniously bannered as "guerrilla cinema" have opened and closed with all the splash of a pea falling into vacuum. Onwurah's posse have set out to scale unconquered heights: a futuristic action thriller without any kind of regular finance at all, and certainly no budget for futuristic

Above: *STARGATE*: James Spader as Dr Daniel Jackson and Mili Avital as Sha'un

Below: *STARGATE*: Dr. Daniel Jackson (James Spader) meets with the mastadon on the planet Abydos.



The cold woke Allie. She was curled up on the pallet. Her fraying blanket had fallen onto the floor. She sat up amongst the blades of moonlight and clutched her knees with her forearm. She coughed and could not stop coughing. She held her hand to her mouth. She inspected the palm for flecks of blood. No blood, just the blisters on her palms fattening. She wiped her hand on her thigh. The touch stabbed pain up her arm. She draped the blanket round her shoulders. It made no difference to the cold. She thumbed on the lights. The room stayed dark.

Allie levered herself up, unsteady on her thin legs. Standing sparked another coughing fit, and she bent double, retching dryly. She pushed her stringy hair back from her face.

She fell to her knees, whimpering, shivering, cursing through chattering teeth. Allie Stevens was 14 years old. She had some pills but she'd need them later. Anyway the coughing warmed her up. She laughed and coughed and laughed.

Allie was a shaver. She'd have to be down the yard before daybreak to meet the first train in at Waterloo International. She couldn't work with blisters on her hands. She wrapped herself in the blanket and felt around for her wedge of glass behind the ventilator grill. She kept it well hidden. No one was going to slit her throat with her wedge. She sat on the window-ledge, a sketch in silverpoint in the moonlight. She had nothing to sterilize the wedge with. She bit her lip. It would take a week for superstaph to get her. She'd have some wad by then. She raked the wedge across her palm.

The naked girl writhed on the steel table. The piano wire that bound her hands above her head cut into her wrists. He smiled. A trickle of blood ran down her arm. He hefted the chain-saw. The girl's eyes widened with terror. He noticed how the rivulet of sweat between her huge tits reflected the arc lights. He gunned the chain-saw into life, its teeth a blur of liquid motion. The girl screamed. Casually, he drove the chain-saw into her and felt the teeth slow as they dug into her pubic bone. The roar of the machine out-shouted her screams. He laughed and reached down to his bulging cock.

Someone kicked the world up through his stomach.

"There's no power on."

"Shit! What the hell?" He tore the VR helmet off.

"Nice and warm in here, though." Allie smiled crookedly at him.

"Bitch! Don't ever bloody well do that again!"

"Got enough power for your wanking machine."

He rubbed a VR gloved hand over his scalp and swigged boiled water. "Bitch!"

Allie laughed at his absurd form, the black VR suit pulled tight over his bloated stomach, the VR sheath hanging limp between his fat thighs. He grimaced at her. "Fuck you, Allie Stevens. You're always moaning about something." He belched.

"No power." Allie shrugged.

"You don't pay enough rent. The spot price is up. Everyone wants power right now. Can't pay, can't have."

Allie bit her lip and hopped from foot to foot. "You've got power on."

"I've got priorities."

"Yeah! Virtual shagging on your wanking machine."

"Research!"

"Yeah, yeah, sure, sure. How much more for power?"

When she'd turned 14 Allie had had to start paying for the six years she'd spent in care after her mother died. She could barely afford to hire her point. She needed some more pills and a shot. Whatever the Housing Association wanted, she hadn't got it.

"Screw me?"

"Screw you?" Allie laughed. "Not even if it was so cold my tits broke off."

"You know what hypothermia is?"

"Dick-head!"

Allie raced out into the night, laughing. She was high, light-headed with hunger. She had managed to nick a packet of crisps. She tore the bag open and munched a stale handful: her first food in two days. "Wanker!" she shrieked.

Allie was out of breath when she got to the yard. Her left calf muscle twitched and burnt. Francis wasn't about. She hunkered into the doorway of a boarded-up shop, and hid from the wind. She rubbed her leg until the pain subsided.

"Getting old, girlie?"

Allie had been drowsing. Her head was full of dust. She shook some out. "Am I first, Francis?" Her teeth were chattering so much it took her three tries to get the words out.

Francis got off his battered bicycle. "You're first, girlie," he smiled. "Give us a hand getting the gates open."

"How much're you going to pay me?"

Francis laughed. "Some hot soup, girlie? It's a cold night."

Allie shrugged. It was a good deal.

Allie cupped the soup bowl. The warmth eased the pain in her palms. Francis's office window was broken. A long fracture split the world in two. Francis jumped across the fracture like a quantum event as he checked his shaws. Allie tried another mouthful of soup. She was so hungry it made her sick.

Cold followed Francis in. He stamped his feet. He warmed his hands over the illegal charcoal brazier. Francis had contacts with the police. He had contacts everywhere. A man needed good contacts to survive these days. Too many sharks and the pond was getting smaller. He watched Allie. One time she had been bright, sharp, hungry. Now she was never there, always half asleep. Starving.

"Allie, you want to do business?"

Allie yawned and put the cooling soup down. She smiled and hopped from foot to foot. "I'm going to need a heated one today, Francis. Look, it's snowing."

Francis watched the large grey flakes settling. "It'll cost you more, Allie." He cracked the knuckles on his left hand in slow succession. "I've had to put the rent up, girlie. Business has not been good with all this weather. My costs are going up, receipts are down. Got a big heating bill. Extra insurance too. Couple of shaws got smashed up last week, girlie. Good shavers are a dying breed. They were good points, too. Even when the insurance coughs, I'll never replace them."

"How much, Francis?"

Francis gazed into the brazier. "Fifty."

"Fifty! I'll never make that much money."

"And five for the charge if you want a heated one."

"Fifty-fucking-five?" Allie only had 35 on her wad. "No one'll take a point out for that. You won't make no money."

"I know my market. You've got to pull more fares, girlie."

Lilith Moon

"There's no fares out there. I'll do you 30 and throw the charge in." Allie clenched her fists and bit back a scream. Too high. She was screwed now.

"Forty-five all in."

Allie shook her head, a quick twitch. "Thirty."

"You short of wad, girlie?"

"I've got money coming out of my arsehole, Frankie, I'm so bloody rich. I've got money cos I don't get screwed. Thirty. With a charge."

"Thirty-five, in advance, and you're robbing me."

"Yeah, yeah. Done."

The shaws were lined up round the sides of the yard, in the sheds. They rested down on their poles, charcoal lines in the moonlight. The floods came on. Allie danced round in a circle of light, swirling snowflakes around her frail body. "Weh-yah!" The electricity company must have priced itself out and cut the tariff. Allie climbed on top of a broken, up-turned point and craned up to look over the wall. Maybe the street lights would come on. She had seen that once. Patch after patch of London light like a quilt. A few shop signs flickered, but the city remained dark. Allie climbed down disappointed.

"Have you made your mind up, girlie?" Francis hugged himself to keep warm, puffing clouds of bright breath under the lights.

Allie gazed along the row of shaws. A gust of wind rattled the corrugated steel of the shed roof. These were the best shaws. Peugeot. Top-quality manufacture. Light weight. Almost no metal at all in their construction. Detail, too. Smartfibre harness and grips. Scratch-resistant monomolecular diamond film coating. Dirt-repellent fluoroplastic sealant. Compact phase transition batteries for the lights, fans, and starter for the solid-fuel heater, Goldstar entertainment and traffic management system. The best.

Allie had been a shaver long enough to know every point, mass produced or not, was a different pull. She saw her favourite, Sunkyoung adverts on the side doors. She skipped over to it and skated her hands over the black body. Gingerly she lifted the poles and pulled the shaw forward. Her brow furrowed in concentration as she listened to its talk of drag and inertia. Francis might have changed the registrations or the adverts around. She had to be sure it was her point. The shaw rolled forward easily. Its wheels spat and popped on the gravel of the yard. Allie smiled broadly, and spun round, bouncing the poles back up into her hands. "Okay!" The harness nudged her back and the straps embraced her shoulders.

Francis flicked his handset on and scanned the registration barcode. "Okay, girlie? Happy? You got your wad? Thirty-five." He held the screen up to Allie's face.

"Okay. And the charge." Francis handed her a packet of solid-fuel heating sticks. Allie inspected the shrink wrap before pocketing them. She fished her wad out of her knickers, swiped it over the back of her hand and passed it to Francis who swiped it through the handset and handed it back in one gesture.

A couple of shadows drifted in through the gate and called lazy greetings. Francis turned to look. Allie signalled the rent she had paid. They circled their fingers in casual thanks. "Come on, Francis, belt me up quick. You've got more customers."

Allie pulled slow out of the yard. She tested her grip and listened to the vibrations of the machine along her fingertips.

The FOR NS Q RUN

More shavers were coming in, some Allie did not recognize, looking for work in the cold. She swore. More competition drove the fares down – and put the hire up. Her experience counted for something, though. And some of these shavers didn't look as if they could pull a plug.

"Yo! Girlie!" a shrill voice called.

Allie looked back over her shoulder. A woman swaddled in bottle-grown furs stood under the arch of the gates. The lights flickered off then, leaving a green neon after-image on Allie's retinae: *Francis Fukuyama Rickshaws for Hire*. She blinked. "Soph?"

"Are you going down to Waterloo? Can you give us a lift?"

"I'm in a hurry, Soph." Allie slowed to a stop and slipped her gloves on. They were Skin-II-Skin but had died in the cold. Still, it was better than nothing.

"Sophie?" Francis called from the gate. "Cold, isn't it! Whatever happened to the Greenhouse Effect?" He laughed.

"Deforestation. Higher albedo, Frankie. And sulphur aerosols."

"Aerosols? I thought they were banned!"

"Dick-head!"

Allie strolled on. "See you there, Soph."

"No, wait, girlie. I've got lots of gear."

"It'll cost you. I don't want to be tired before I start."

"Two?"

"Forget it. I don't have to work yet. Lots of fares at the station. See you around, Soph."

"Three fifty!"

"No heating. You've got all that fur on."

"Done."

The station forecourt was waking, full of expectation. Whores and shaggers, goose-pimpled in the cold, straightened their clothes and applied last-minute touches of make-ups. Hawkers set out their stalls and displays and slipped trinkets or money to the gangstas and bad bitches running the protection. Hordes of grubby children ran screeching among the booths and boutiques, begging, cajoling, threatening. They fought and scuffled over each treasure won from the stallholders. Munch-mastas argued with an Arrivals plc official. They waved their wads and demanded that electricity supply contracts for their ovens and grills be honoured. The Arrivals woman shouted back at them. A police dog left off chasing the children and snapped at the heels of the munch-mastas. The Arrivals woman smiled into the pocket of silence and invited bids for supply. The dog ambled off. The flags and pennants of the food stalls snapped in the wind, offering the promise of Cooked English Breakfast and Fish'n'Chips in européen, Cyrillic and *wen*.

"No pimps," shouted Sophie over the din, gesturing to a knot of pre-teen whores squabbling with a psychopharm dealer. "You've got a century of feminism to thank for the rout of the cockocracy, girlie."

"Yeah, yeah." Allie was wheezing moistly. She looked around for a Nasha. She would need more pills today.

"Here, girlie."

Allie stepped back, letting the poles run forward and down through her loosely curled fingers. As the poles neared the ground, Allie braced her feet and brought the shaw to a smooth stop. She touched the poles down without a bump. "Yeah," she whispered and touched off a coughing fit.

"You should see a Nasha, girlie." Sophie hefted her case of New Age nick-nacks.

"Yeah. Three fifty, Soph."

Sophie smiled winningly.

"Soph!"

Sophie backed a couple of steps. "It's going to be a busy day, girlie. I need some change for my float."

"Bitch!" Allie lifted the poles as Sophie turned and ran. Allie slew the shaw round and caught Sophie in the back of her legs with the poles, knocking her flat.

Sophie screamed: "You've ruined my gear!"

Allie stepped forward and let the poles run through her hands. She braced for a roll. A police dog trotted over and stood protectively over Sophie.

The dog looked up at Allie with its half-intelligent eyes. It flared its nostrils, sniffing her scent. Police dogs never forgot a scent. They were designed that way. Allie backed up, the weight of the shaw straining her back. "Three fifty, Soph, you owe me."

"Fuck off, Allie." Sophie levered herself up. "You push your luck and I'll sue you."

"Fuck you."

"You tell her, girlie," called a voice from the small crowd of spectators.

Some of the onlookers laughed. Sophie pushed her way through them. She turned back and gave Allie a "kiss my fanny" over her head. Allie spat and saw she spat blood. She laughed because there was nothing else to do.

Allie pulled up beside Lucy. Her nose was red with cold, her skin was slick with sweat. They waited at the lights as the traffic rolled, lurched and stumbled across the river. The wind froze Allie's skin to her bones. She nudged the blowers down with numb fingers. The Ukrainian didn't need so much heat now they were standing still, and Allie didn't want the batteries to shag on her. The Ukrainian leant over to her husband in Lucy's point and gestured to the Houses of Parliament half-hidden behind security fencing, garlanded and bedecked with sponsors' trademarks and logos.

"Are you okay, Al?"

Allie looked really sick. Lucy was nervous about taking the double pull with her. If Allie couldn't make it she'd lose all the fare. Allie had been a good shaver once, and she'd kept up the drag fine in the morning rush. Some of the other shavers had sniggered at the station when she'd agreed to the pull. But Allie had experience, a good nose for fares: a tenner each for these Ukrainians.

Allie bobbed her head. "I'm fine, Loose."

Lucy flexed her re-engineered muscles. She got bad aches across her shoulders. She'd come off the puberty suppressants. She was letting herself grow up. "Not much sleep?" she asked.

"Not much."

"Oh."

They rolled forward a couple of metres. Their hands teased the poles.

"Growing pains?" Allie asked.

Lucy laughed. "Yeah." There was no money in whoring. There were so many bugs around, Lucy paid out most of what she earned to the Nashas. All the psychos liked the little girls. She didn't mind the bruises, but it cost good wad to fix the scars. "Going to live on pulling."

Allie grunted. The little tart was built to pull. She was young enough, fit enough, to have her muscles done. There were more shavers like Lucy every day, all of the surgery, none

of the skill. Allie laughed. A gap had opened up in the traffic where a cart had rolled over. "Come on!"

They wove a hundred metres through curses and "kiss my fannies." The road surface was so bad the Ukrainian's giggles sounded like hiccups.

After Parliament Square the traffic started moving. Allie and Lucy dodged the Traffic Stop on Great George Street in file, the Greenies didn't mind points so much, and leant into a run along Birdcage Walk. Allie loved a run. With a good point at your heels and a clear road beneath your feet, you hardly felt the weight. The morning sun was behind them and they chased their shadows past the shanty town on St James's Park.

Dr Elsbeth McClellan sat down heavily on the edge of the bed. She pushed her half-moons up her nose and squinted at Allie. "How are you today, child?"

Dr McClellan was a real doctor, not a Nasha or a medtek. Allie was stupefied. The doctor consulted her handheld. "You're a lucky girl, Alexandra," she said.

Allie laughed a little. Mummy only called her Alexandra when she was naughty. Allie laughed some more when she realized she could laugh without coughing. She stared at the doctor's grey eyes, at her wrinkles, at her brittle white hair. "Where's my mummy?" she asked.

The doctor frowned and turned to a care assistant who shook her head slightly. The doctor sighed and turned back to Allie. "Alexandra, you're going to have to be a brave girl."

Dr McClellan closed her eyes for a deliberate pause. "We haven't fixed you, Alexandra."

Allie didn't know what the doctor meant. Ever since she had come here, she could breathe. She didn't cough. The taste of blood in her mouth had gone.

"Inside your body, in your blood, are millions and millions of tiny wee machines helping you breath and fighting the nasty beasties that make you ill."

It sounded like fixing to Allie.

"Every so often, the wee machines wear out and break down, you see. So you'll need new ones to keep well. You'll need to buy new ones, do you see?"

Allie didn't see, and wanted her mummy, then started to cry. Dr McClellan held her distantly, at arms' length and after she didn't stop crying she held her tight.

"There was no one to pay for new lungs, child. No one to pay. I'm sorry."

"Do these things wear out faster because I'm growing, Tone?"

The Nasha laughed. "Uh-uh, girlie."

"The last ones were New Improved, and they didn't last as long as the ones before that. Maybe a week sooner and I was coughing bad. Are you selling me shit?"

"Where d'you learn language like that, child? Ain't no one tell you no lady talks like that?"

Allie pouted and stared at her feet. She shuffled disconsolately from foot to foot.

"Aah," the Nasha sighed. "Well it ain't no secret, girlie. Millions of people got mutated drug-resistant TB. All round the world, everywhere." He gestured expansively. "Lung repair, lung replacement, girl, that's mega-expensive. Big money needed for them machines and doctors and cloning and regrowth to do the job. But nanoids are cheap to make. Get the program right, girlie, and they make themselves! Drugs companies can make big profits, lots of wad for them and the

shareholders, girlie, making them little machines to fight the TB."

"How come the machines wear out then?"

"What we call harsh economic reality, girlie. You want to live, so you keep on paying month after month, to keep on living. If the nanoids cured you all at once, or fixed themselves as they wore down, girl, would you keep on paying? Would you come back and see the Nashas, and need more care, need more treatment, need more cure? Loads of people got jobs 'cos of you, girlie. Loads of people making money."

Allie stopped hopping from foot to foot. It didn't sound fair to her, but profit was profit and made the world richer and meant that everything got better. So it had to be fair. Like Tone said, harsh economic reality. But she wanted to cry. "If it's New Improved, Tone, how come it don't work better?"

The Nasha frowned and made invisible adjustments to the analgesics display. "Maybe it works better, girlie, just not for so long."

Lucy and Allie leant on the railing at the rickshaw rank. Steam rose from them in the cold light. A steady stream of passengers came out of the Museums to the South Ken rank. It was a good place for fares and the row of shavers was constantly moving forward. Allie felt great after her run, all hot and high. A street-boy plied the line of shaws, selling hot soup and rolls. Allie traded the still smouldering end of her heater charge for a couple of ladles of soup. The boy was well pleased with his deal and carefully stubbed the fuel stick out before wrapping it in a dead strip of Skin-II-Skin and slipping it under his shirt. Allie and Lucy shared the cracked soup bowl, sipping the hot yellowish broth cautiously.

"It tastes okay, Loose."

"Smells like rat," Lucy giggled.

"Garnished with cockroach and insecticide-resistant fleas," Allie imitated the européen tones of a popular virtual chef.

The two girls laughed. The soup boy glanced back at them to make sure they hadn't broken his bowl.

"Are you going to do okay on pulling, Loose? You need more'n new muscles."

"I'll be fine, Al, better than you. Learn all your tricks, get all your knowledge. And I still got me lungs."

Allie laughed. "All right, girlie!"

They sipped soup in silence.

"You got a mum, Al, family?" Lucy whispered, as though she was afraid of an answer.

Allie shifted her grip on the poles, and rolled sideways half a metre, blocking out a little kid queue-jumping. She stuck out her tongue. "Fuck you!" the kid called back. Allie paid him no more attention. "No, I ain't, Loose. Me mum died during the TB. I ain't never seen my brother since."

"You're lucky, Al. I wish my mother had died. She sued me for post-natal depression. I'll be paying for the shrinks until the day I bloody die!"

"I got to pay for me time in care, Loose. Everybody's got to pay something, girlie, it's the way the world is."

"Yeah. I guess."

"Weah-yeh, girlie! Digesting all that food's making you sad. Your body wants to rest. Just say no."

Pulling was good that day. Allie had nearly 50 on her wad. One, maybe two more pulls and she'd be okay to see a Nasha tonight. Her breathing wasn't so good and she'd coughed blood again. After South Ken Allie avoided the popular rick-

shaw stands. A scuffle had broken out at the rank. Some of the kiddies were psyching out as the weather got worse. Lucy thought it was steroids, but Allie knew the cold was making everyone crazy. In the punch-up someone nearly rolled Allie and Lucy had poled him so hard she'd bust his bollocks. "That's my buzz!" she screamed. Allie smiled.

"Rickshaw!"

A smart man, woollen coat, gold-rimmed glasses, and anxious look, hailed her from the kerb. Allie slowed, glanced over her shoulders and pulled in.

"Rickshaw!" the man called again.

"Where to, sir?" Allie flicked off the hire light.

"Wandsworth, quick as you can."

Allie's thumb hesitated over the switch. She had been working north and east so she was close to the yard by the end of the day. It would be dark by she got to Wandsworth, and she'd have to haul back.

"It's a long way, sir."

"Eighteen."

It was a good fare. "It's out of my area. I'll never get a fare back, sir, it'll be late. Twenty-four. Best I can do."

"Twenty, that's it." The man scanned the traffic, watching for another shaw.

Allie took a chance. Lots of shavers had packed in for the day. "Twenty-two."

The man sighed, exasperated. "Twenty-one or forget it."

"Twenty-one, sir, done. Very generous."

The man smiled. He showed dazzling, straight teeth. "My daughter's coming along." He beckoned and a shabby woman, a nanny, brought a little girl out of the shadows. The girl was blonde and frail and unused to the outside like all the children of the wealthy. She shrank back behind her father and stared covertly up at Allie with watery grey eyes.

Allie cursed silently. Done again. She made a "kiss my fanny" behind her back. "In the interests of safety, sir, keep your daughter firmly on your lap."

The man climbed aboard and lifted his daughter from her nanny's arms. The point dipped and the suspension groaned. Allie didn't fight the move and let the suspension bounce the poles back into her hands. She winced as they slapped her blisters.

"They're not to know," the man hissed at the nanny.

"Yes, sir," she bobbed.

Allie set a fuel stick burning and flicked the blowers on. She leant into the roll and her palms rebelled. She bit her lip and the point jerked into the evening traffic stream.

"Steady on!" the fare cried. The little girl giggled.

Allie took a breath and gripped the poles firmly. She blinked and shook her head. It was darker than she thought.

They followed the railway line towards the coast. A river of shadows in the darkness, they fled the plague in the city. Allie's brother ran ahead with a group of older boys. They clutched sticks or baseball bats or home-made guns and jeered and swaggered once they'd left the army patrols behind at the river. Allie's mum clutched her daughter's hand. Her rough palm was clammy. She called into the darkness after her son. "Josh! Josh!" Some of the others round her hushed her with angry whispers.

A chopper flew low over the Docklands to their left. Its spotlight swept the waterlogged piazzas and the broken towers. It probed the darkness for squatters and raked the river for boats dodging the quarantine. Some people fell flat on the

embankments, others cowered. Allie's mum held her hand tighter. "Ow," she moaned. Some of the boys waved sticks and threw vain stones. Distant gunfire stuttered up from the towers and the chopper veered back towards the city.

A train was derailed at Dulwich. It blocked the track, an uncertain threat. Some of the men thought it was a trap. The station was quiet and the surrounding houses were dark. A heavy stink choked the area. The boys and some of the girls heaved a passage through the carriages. Someone screamed and screamed. The train was full of corpses.

They streamed on south, the force of those bringing up the rear drove the reluctant ones on. By early morning, Allie and her mum had reached the tunnel at Sydenham. The tunnel was a mouth in the scorched hill cursing.

They hid in the dark throat. Allie watched cigarette coals dance like the spare shoals of traffic, furtive consumers of human vice, who trawled the city at night. She was scared and held on to her mummy and slept a while. Allie woke after an eternity of damp stillness. A blue figure like a little devil danced past her eyes. She tugged her mummy's hair.

"Mum?"

"Shh, Al, just rest."

The ghost came back. It stuck its tongue out and wagged its fingers behind its ears.

"Mum, look!"

"Josh! Run!" Allie's mum scooped her up and pushed back down the tunnel. Allie couldn't breathe. She tried to lever up her mummy's fingers.

"Mum!"

Behind them, someone stumbled onto the re-electrified rail. Blue crack. Awful scream. Smell like McDonalds that made Allie hungry. Frozen faces in spiral hell. "Keep off the rail!" Then stumbling dark drowning in a sea of bodies. Echoing paradiddles of small-arms fire. Freeze-frame, freeze-frame, frozen blue like cheap virtual pornography. Push. Shove. Fireworks, blood and shit. MUM. Then, impossibly, a rent of constant light that the world was falling into.

Allie stumbled. The shoulder straps caught her and hurt her. A voice somewhere. The dark bent forward and bore down. Allie's eyes implored it. It hesitated. She toppled. Hands over head. Something hurt. Falling.

"Hey! Steady on!"

"Mister, I don't feel so good!"

Pothole, road, "Oof!" The straps winded her. Allie retched. She threw up yellow streaked with red.

"Ugh! Daddy!" A frightened little voice.

"Disgusting."

Splatter. Into the kerb. At her side. Keep running. Damned rat soup. Allie spat and shook her head. Droplets of sweat misted from the ends of her hair. A wave of nonbeing washed through her. And back: cold, darker still. Allie laughed and faced into the run. Wandsworth. Behind her eyes she saw the steaming pile of Young's brewery. Under her tongue she caught the sweet old taste of malt like childhood Horlicks. Seeing is being there.

The weight on her shoulders had lifted. She raised her hands and spread her fingers before her eyes. Her hands were bare. In the liquid light the callouses and blisters were gone. Nothing held her. Nothing pulled her back. "Whoo-oo ye-yeah!" Allie jumped up and nuttied the bright blue sky. She landed, tumbling, in the long crisp grass and stirred a commotion of

iridescent paired wings. Butterflies. She'd heard of them. She bounced up and ran on through the meadow. She breathed the warm air. She whirled her arms through excited orbits and swirled eddies of bright insects in her wake. She saw that each blade of grass was a new and different colour. The meadow was spattered with papery flowers, red and orange and pink. Allie didn't know their names. She ran on. The grass swished and crackled around her legs. The air smelled warm and dusty and sweet. Allie laughed and laughed, breathless with wild joy. It was like VR but more real. She ran on, free, to her mummy.

The man gripped the little girl's hand. "You're hurting me, Daddy! Daddy! You're hurting me!"

He kicked Allie in the stomach. "Bitch! Get up! Get the hell up!"

"She's not well, Daddy. I think she's ill."

He kicked the little shaver again. "Bitch!" His boot crunched bone. "Shit! Oh, shit!"

The little girl was crying. "Daddy! Da-deeee!"

He stripped off his gloves and wiped his brow with a shaky hand. He squatted down to face his daughter. He stroked her damp cheek. "I'm sorry, poppet. Daddy's sorry. Shh! Shh! Sweetheart."

"I'm cold!" The little girl smiled after a while and folded her

arms importantly. "The lady's ill, daddy."

"I know poppet." He sighed and put his gloves back on. "Stay close to Daddy, sweetie."

The child held on to her father's trousers. He pushed the fallen rickshaw into the kerb. "We don't want to lose our no-claims bonus, do we, poppet?" The shaver was heavier than he expected. His daughter stared fixedly at the narrow, blood-streaked face as he heaved Allie against the poles of her rickshaw. "There!" He lifted his daughter up and kissed her.

"Bleah! You're all sweaty!"

They walked down the road. He worried about paying for some power at the next light. He didn't know what kind of neighbourhood this was. But the yellow pool kept back the darkness and made him feel better. He watched the traffic.

"Rickshaw!"

Lilith Moon lives in Bromley, Kent, where she works in a supermarket. The above is her first published story.

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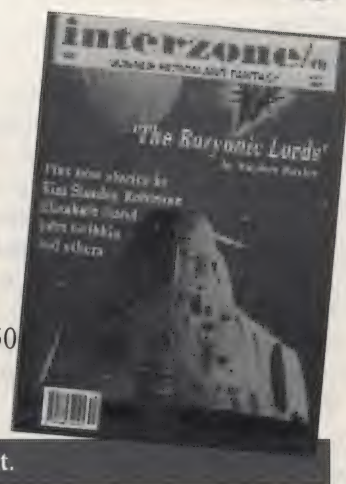
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There was another one of them this morning, by Waterloo Station. He was a young lad. About a month ago, he had asked me for money. He said it was to feed his dog. He kept the animal inside his jacket and it poked its head out. I remember thinking it looked too gentle a creature to live out on the street. The dog leaned out and tried to lick my hand.

"I'm sorry," I told him. "I only have 20 pence."

He had some sort of regional accent, rather pleasant actually. "Ach, I cannot take a man's last 20 pee."

"Take it, take it, I've got credit cards." Why do they beg for change when no one carries money any more? Finally I got him to take it. The tips of his fingers were yellow.

He lived with others of his kind under a railway arch that had canvas across its mouth and a painted board over the top that announced that it was a Homeless Peoples' Theatre Group. Rather enterprising I thought, and I would have gone, except that they never put anything on. Sometimes when I walked past, there would be a fire behind the canvas and a few chords from a guitar. That took me back, I can tell you. Just try to hear a guitar anywhere these days.

Someone had crucified him. He was hanging on a wire mesh fence in front of a demolition site. A crowd of people were gawking at him, as though they were slightly but personally embarrassed by something. I think they were feeling a bit silly, grinning at each other, rather like they used to look when they lined up to see the Queen. Actually, I couldn't imagine what they were feeling.

Very suddenly all the boys, none of the girls, just the boys, began to dance in unison, a sort of gloomy square dance. Well, that was just too much for me, I couldn't make it out at all, I turned to an older woman who looked rather sensible. By older, I mean about 35, and I said to her, "He had a dog. Has anyone seen his dog?"

She tutted. "They would have killed that too." She said it in the most extraordinary way. I simply could not understand her tone of voice. I think she felt it would have been a botched job if they had not killed the dog.

"You oughtn't to be allowed out," she said, with a kind of crooked smile. Her intent may even have been kindly, to warn me. But there was a glint about it that I did not like. It is obviously going to be my fate from now on to understand every word that anyone says to me, but not a single sentence. I couldn't find the dog.

And I couldn't face the wait on the train platform either. I do hate stepping over sleeping bags, especially when they're full of person. I indulged and took a taxi.

"Steady on, old boy, let me help you in," said the driver.

"Thank you," I said, trying to settle myself in, but my coat had twisted itself about me in the most uncomfortable way. "It's good to know that human beings are not an entirely extinct species."

He was looking at me in his mirror by now, his face closed up like a shop. I evidently was an old codger.

"There's just been another one of those killings," I said. "ALL these people smirking at the poor boy just as though someone had told a bad joke. Nobody trying to get the poor lad down from where they'd strung him up."

"Uh," he said. "Yeah." Yes, I was a boring old coot, and I was going to go on being boring.

"It's not decent. There wasn't a shred of acknowledgement that killing people is wrong."

The taxi driver shrugged. "Some people think it keeps the

streets clear."

"Well, there's a lot of old people too. I suppose you'll be saying they ought to start on us next."

He roared with laughter. He nodded. I think he agreed.

I got out and watched him drive off, and it was only then that I realized I'd forgotten to get my coffee. Coffee, I'll have you know, was the whole reason for going to Waterloo in the first place. There used to be a little shop near me that sold coffee, nice young person ran it, rather old fashioned, you know, dungarees and no make up. I could talk to her. Now the only place left is near Waterloo, where they sell it to Frenchmen. It's like going into a sex shop. All nudges and winks and some sort of coffee-fiend argot. And I do resent being held up as some sort of laboratory specimen proving the harmlessness of caffeine.

"There you go," says the man behind the counter, and points to me. "He's still with us. Didn't do him any harm, did it?"

"I drink coffee because I like the taste," I say, and they all roar with laughter. Well, it's nice to find yourself a continual source of amusement to others.

I live in fear. I can't carry groceries, they're too heavy for me. Not that anyone knows what you mean when you use the word groceries. They send these food kits. You know, yeast tablets, vitamin E capsules. And the persons who deliver them are more terrifying than anything you'll see around Waterloo. They wear these tribal mask things over their faces. I asked one of them once if it was something to do with air pollution. His response was to repeat the words "air pollution" several times over, at increasing volume. I think everyone imagines they're having to shout at people who are wearing headphones.

And I don't like those Home Help things. How is a computer supposed to know what's good for you? Bloody fascist health freaks. Always trying to replace a good cuppa with Hibiscus or Rose Hip — they all sound like plump women. I refuse to have my eating habits monitored by a machine. I'll eat and drink what I like, thank you very much.

I finally succeeded in getting my front door open, and there was my niece and her friend with their boots on my sofa. I can't say I like the way she drops in and uses my house, but you can't be an old stick all the time, can you. My niece is called Gertrude and her friend is Brunnhilde. Who gives people these names? They all sound like characters in grand opera.

"Tough time, Grumps?" Gertrude bellows. It's like trying to hold a conversation in the middle of a rugby pitch.

"You'll get marks on my sofa," I tell her.

"Not marks. Bloodstains," said Brunnhilde going all bug-eyed like a horror movie. Something else they don't have these days. Both girls are huge, vast, like something out of the first issue of *Superman*, you know, lifting vehicles single handed. I, in the meantime, am getting into a wrestling match with my coat and scarf. My coat and scarf are winning. Even my clothing is insolent these days.

"Here, let me do it for you," says Gertrude and takes them from me. "Wossa ma-ah, Grumps?" Her speech it interrupted by more glottal stops than a Morris Minor in need of a service.

"I saw another one of those bodies," I said.

"You weren't down Wa'ahloo, again, were you?" she said.

"It's where I get my coffee from," I said. "Or rather, used to."

"Coffee," says Brunnhilde and makes a moue of disgust the size of a bagel. "I'd rather drink paint stripper."

"Wa'ahloo is where all the dossers hang out, Grumps. Issa bloody wossa butcher shop."

Brunnhilde is rubbing her thighs in a way that I take to be sarcastic. "Maybe he likes a bit of excitement."

Gertrude giggles at the idea, and smooths down my coat. For her, it lies still. I tell you the thing is alive and has it in for me. "Look, Grumps. Do yourself a favour. Stay north of the river. You don't know where the safe passages are."

"I refuse to accept that there are parts of this city where I must not walk."

"You don't go for a stroll down the middle of the motorway, do you? Come on, sit down."

I do as I'm told, but I'm still upset. My hands are shaking. They are also lumpy and blue and cold. "Why do they do it?" I say.

"Why do we do it, you mean," says Gertrude, plumping up a pillow.

"You do it?"

"Well, yeah. We all do it, Grumps. It's game. There's too many of them on the streets. If you know what you're doing, you don't get hurt. You know. You're out with your mates, you're in a gang, you see another gang. You leave each other alone."

"And go for the defenceless. Well that is brave of you!"

Brunnhilde explains the rationale for me. "They're killing themselves with all that booze and fags." I remembered the yellow tips of that boy's fingers.

"Then let them do it in peace, you don't have to help them."

Oh dear. I'm shocked again. I can't accept that nice young people on a date will kill someone as part of the evening's entertainment. In my day, you felt racy if you fell down in the gutter. Stoned was lying on your back upside down and realizing you were trying to crawl across the sky.

"They're just using up resources," says Brunnhilde, and she stands up, and starts to case the joint. Her upper lip is working as her tongue runs back and forth over her teeth. It looks as though she has a mouthful of weasels. "You live here all alone, then?" she asks.

"I was married," I say.

"Nice place. Aren't you a bit scared living here all alone? With all this stuff?" She is fingering my Yemeni dagger. A souvenir of a very different time and place.

"Some of it must be worth a packet. Don't you feel unprotected?"

"Yes," I say. "All the time."

"Yeah. You could be here all alone and someone come in." She's taken the dagger out of its decorated sheath. It's curved and it gleams. It's not very sharp. It would hurt

"In the end, it's all just things," I say.

"Oh, can I have some of them, then?" she asks, and giggles. I'm rather pleased to report that I was not frightened, simply aware of what was going on.

"Look at the poor old geezer," said Brunnhilde. "Using up space. Using up food." She looked at Gertrude. "Let's put him out of his misery."

"Honestly, Brum, you're such a wanker!" Gertrude said, and threw a pillow at her. "I mean, your idea of sport is to pitch into my old Grumps? Well, you do like a pulse-pounder, don't you?"

Brunnhilde looked downcast, as though she had failed to

H O M E

Geoff Ryman

be elected Head Girl.

Gertrude was on her feet. "Come on, let's get you out before Grumps does you some collateral. Honestly. You can be so naff sometimes"

"All right then!" said Brunnhilde, biting back rather ineffectively. "Social work is not my forte anyway." She took a final slurp of my fruit juice. As she held the glass, she curled her little finger delicately away from it. Then Gertrude bundled her towards the door.

"See you later, Grumps. I'll take this wild woman off your hands."

"I wasn't frightened, you know." I said. I wanted her to know that.

"Course not. You're the hard type that goes to Waterloo." They both laughed, and the door closed. I heard Gertrude say outside. "S'all right. I'll get it all when he dies anyway."

I'm reasonably certain that Gertrude saved my life, but I don't think she thought that was very important. She did it rather as one might stop someone putting his greasy head on the anti-macassars. I am so grateful for small favours.

But at least I understood what was happening

I miss Amy, of course. I sometimes wonder if things would be any different if we'd had children, grandchildren. They would have turned out like Gertrude, I expect. Strangers, complete strangers, no matter how often I talked to them.

So. I bolted my door, and I went Home.

It is vaguely embarrassing. I expect I smiled to myself, slightly guilty, slightly ashamed, like those people gawking at corpses. Rigging myself up in all the gear, as though I were auditioning for a part in *Terminator II*. Better than the muck they put on these days, it's all like old Shirley Temple movies to me. I slip on the spectacles and I put on the boots and the gloves, and then I'm off Home

Village near Witney, Oxfordshire, 1954. Church bells. The elms have not all died of disease, so there are banks of them, huge, high, billowing like clouds and squawking with rookeries. And all the Cotswold stone houses are lined up with thatched roofs and crooked windows in which sit Delft vases,

and the Home Service is playing music so sensible it almost smells of toasted white bread. There used to be a country called England. I'm not the one who remembers this it, though I was there. My bones remember it.

And I knock on a door and say "Good morning, Mrs Clavell, is Kimberly there, please?" and then out comes my friend Kim.

Same age as me. We've taken recently to looking as we actually are, old fools. Kim has some snow-white hair left and his cheeks are mapped with purple veins. But we're wearing shorts and we can climb trees. We can climb to the pinnacle of the old ruined abbey, and there is no one guarding it and no one charging admission. No *son et lumière* for Japanese tourists. And do you know? Hardly even a ritual killing. It's ours.

Kim moved to California, and became both rich and poor at the same time as is the way in California, always about to make a film. He's even worse off than I am now, in some home, without another friend in the world, in someone else's country. But he's Home now.

We take the short cut, through the fields, past the hall. Here, the safe passages are ours, all the way to the river.

Geoff Ryman is well-known to *Interzone* readers – his "Unconquered Country" (IZ7), recently republished as the lead story in a collection in the USA, won the World Fantasy Award. "Love Sickness" (IZ20-21) was the basis of the later novel *The Child Garden*. He also appeared in every issue of *Nexus*. "The Diary of the Translator" (NX1) was a reprint of his first-ever published story. "The Future of Science Fiction" (NX2), "The King of Porn" (NX3), and "Dead Space for the Unexpected" (NX4/IZ88) were specially written for *Nexus* as commentary on contemporary life. "Home", the latest in this series, was written for *Nexus* 5. It appears here as part of the *Interzone/Nexus* merger.

Letters wanted –

Please write to *Interzone* – we may not be able to reply to every letter, but we're always interested to hear readers' responses. Unless otherwise stated, all letters will be considered for publication.

interzone SCIENCE FICTION AND FANTASY

Theodore Sturgeon joined John W. Campbell Jr's stable of science-fiction writers in 1939, and he was still working in the years immediately prior to his death in 1985, but almost all the fiction for which he is remembered was written between 1946 and 1962. He spent the last 20 years of his life suffering from a "writer's block" which he breached only occasionally and without ever recovering the power of his early work; the Hugo and Nebula awards given to "Slow Sculpture" in 1970 were a belated recognition of his contribution to the history of the genre rather than testimony to the merits of that particular story.

Sturgeon's motto in his later years was "Ask the next question!"; he was fond of arguing that if and when people stopped doing that they were effectively dead, and he was wont to declare that resistance to change is "the only unnatural practice." The fact that he found it impossible to make further progress in his own creative endeavours must have been exceedingly frustrating, but he was no stranger to frustration. Indeed, the great majority of his memorable works may be regarded as elaborate studies of extraordinarily extreme frustration, sometimes – but by no means always – magically redeemed in an equally extreme fashion.

Theodore Sturgeon was an adopted name, the surname being that of his stepfather (his difficult relationship with his stepfather is featured in *Argyll, a Memoir*, 1993, a chapbook essay discovered among his posthumous papers). He was born Edward Hamilton Waldo in New York City in 1918. Initially rather puny, he was spurred on by his tough-minded stepfather to become a gymnast of considerable prowess, but his dreams of making a career as an acrobat were dashed by a severe bout of rheumatic fever when he was 15. When he recovered his health he went to nautical college to train as an officer but after resolutely enduring the routine bullying for a year he settled for life as an ordinary seaman.

While at sea Sturgeon began writing short fiction for a newspaper syndicate, eventually returning to shore in the hope of building a career on the shaky foundation of what were then very meagre returns. After seeing a copy of the first issue of *Unknown* in

The Creators of Science Fiction – 2

THEODORE STURGEON

1939 he began sending stories to John Campbell. His earliest submission, "Helix the Cat," failed to sell until it appeared in the Campbell Memorial Anthology *Astounding* (1973) edited by Harry Harrison, but he soon made his debut in *Astounding* with "Ether Breather" (1939), quickly followed in *Unknown* by "A God in a Garden" (1939), which had been written earlier.

Sturgeon's interests and writing style were much better suited to *Unknown* than *Astounding*. "Ether Breather" and its sequel are light, humorous pieces which counterbalanced the more earnest material which Campbell was trying to bring to a new level of sophistication, but Sturgeon could not adapt himself to the kind of "hard sf" which was the magazine's staple diet. Campbell must have fed him the idea for "Artnan Process" (1941) – a space opera whose plot turns on an esoteric problem in isotope separation – but Sturgeon obviously found the composition of the story awkward and uncongenial. His imaginatively unfettered work for *Unknown* was much more exuberant and occasionally brilliant, ranging from delightfully quirky comedies through neat *contes cruels* to the vividly horrific "It" (1940), which features a kind of ultimate monster: the distilled essence of teratology.

Sturgeon did, however, make one contribution to *Astounding* which made a deep impression on its readers even though he did not like the story himself. This was "Microcosmic God" (1941), in which a scientist takes advantage of the technological products of a miniature world where time runs at a much faster rate than in our own, until the tiny "Neoterics" invent a force-shield with which to isolate themselves from further interference. The readers who elevated this story to classic status were

presumably impressed by the central motif of the artificial world, but Sturgeon was never much interested in ideas for their own sake; for him "Microcosmic God" was a parable of cynical exploitation fostering megalomania, which unfortunately failed to reach a morally satisfying conclusion. The last line of the story is of a kind which always appealed to Campbell, but it is quite foreign to the intimately personal conclusions which Sturgeon favoured. Sturgeon's true strength as a writer was an ability to get inside his characters, to explore and pass judgment on the fundamental wellsprings of their motivation: their inmost impulses and desires; their most jealously-guarded secrets.

As an adept student of human behaviour Sturgeon was very conscious of the cruelty which lurked beneath the masks of civilization, and the ways in which the taboos of conventional morality (which he was always careful to distinguish from more fundamental ethical systems) could pervert even healthy and benevolent sentiments into anxieties and phobias. Readers who found him uncomfortable – as did the many American editors who rejected his horror story "Blanca's Hands" before it won a competition run by the British *Argosy* in 1947 – accused him of having a "nasty mind" but in fact he had a mind so abundantly stocked with the "rebel passions" pity and anguish that he could not help reacting with naked horror to the nastiness he perceived in others. "Microcosmic God" did not seem to him to be one of his better stories precisely because it was deflected away from its study of the conscienceless exploitation of the Neoterics by their tyrant-God to a

Brian Stableford

more objective consideration of the longer-term implications of the story's central premise. This broadening of imaginative horizons was a primary concern of Campbellian science fiction, but for Sturgeon science-fictional ideas were potentially ingenious instruments for use in the construction of parables regarding the human condition and the ills afflicting it.

Given this, it is not surprising that Sturgeon found it increasingly difficult to cope with Campbell's editorial demands. By the time "Microcosmic God" appeared in print he had effectively abandoned writing, and he spent the next five years doing various odd jobs to earn a living. During this interim he produced only one sf story: the novella "Killdozer!" (1944), in which an archetypal product of modern technology is arbitrarily invaded by an alien force which sets forth to annihilate everything human from its surroundings. Campbell – who presumably, and perhaps quite rightly, never paused to wonder whether this might be an oblique caricature of his own ideals – gratefully published it at a time when his sources of material had been severely depleted by the effects of the war.

When Sturgeon began writing again he produced some striking cautionary tales inspired by the advent of the atom bomb, including "Memorial" (1946) and "Thunder and Roses" (1947), and some heartfelt stories of first contact between humans and aliens in which communication proves tragically difficult to establish, including "Mewhu's Jet" (1946) and "Tiny and the Monster" (1947). The most powerful, and perhaps the most revealing, of the early stories of this new phase was the novella "Maturity" (1947), which tracks a female doctor's frustrating relationship with a childlike man who is psychologically blocked in the quest to develop his extraordinary creative gifts. Her determination to bring him to what she considers to be maturity is ultimately fruitless, but he claims to have found an infinitely more modest maturity of his own definition.

The depth of feeling in "Maturity" is remarkable, and was quite unprecedented in pulp science fiction. Sturgeon went on to explore many more ways of allegorizing the alienation and frustration of sensitive

individuals, but he had difficulty finding appropriate markets for such work despite the high regard which editors had for his talents. He published extensively in *Weird Tales*, placed his first novel and several novelettes in *Fantastic Adventures*, and was not ashamed to deploy the lushly colourful imagery of *Planet Stories* in "The Incubi of Parallel X" (1951), but it was the founding of *Galaxy* in 1950 which offered him the opportunity to forge a niche tailored to his own requirements.

After 1949 Sturgeon made only one more appearance in Campbell's *Astounding*, with the slyly non-serious "Won't You Walk?" (1956). This parting of the ways is all the more significant when one bears in mind that in this period Campbell and Sturgeon both became intensely preoccupied with the notion of "psi-powers": telepathy, psychokinesis, precognition, etc.

Belief in such strange powers of the mind was very old, and they had long featured in imaginative fiction of all kinds, but it was not until J. B. Rhine of Duke University provided them with a new pseudoscientific jargon and an alleged basis in statistical abnormalities derived from laboratory experiments that they attained a mask of respectability adequate to earn them a leading role in *Astounding Science Fiction*. Campbell became convinced that the phenomena recorded by Rhine and his followers were evidence that a giant leap in human evolution was already in the making, and *Astounding* pushed this notion as hard as it had earlier pushed the (now vindicated) notion that atomic power would soon become a reality. The moral implications of this development were by no means neglected, and stories of unjustly persecuted supermen were commonplace in *Astounding*. Campbell's conception of the moral questions at stake was admirably summed up in the Hugo-winning serial *They'd Rather Be Right* (1954) by Mark Clifton and Frank Riley, whose concluding monologue is pure Campbell, arguing that people must give up their entrenched prejudices and overcome their conservative fears if they were to take advantage of new technologies and new mental powers.

At first sight, Sturgeon's interest in psi-powers appears very similar to Campbell's. He too was fond of writing

tales of unjust persecution whose message was that people ought to abandon their entrenched prejudices, and he too became fascinated with the imagery of a sudden transcendent evolutionary leap. In fact, though, the two men approached the problem from opposite directions and the fiction they favoured carried a very different thrust. Campbell's approach modelled that of the scientist: here is the fact of emergent psi-powers, what are the logical consequences? For Sturgeon, the primary fact was that of the deeply frustrating sense of alienation possessed by all people who felt themselves to be different, and the bullying they often suffered in consequence; the possession of strange mental powers appealed to him firstly as a way of modelling and melodramatizing that experience and secondly as an ideative foundation-stone on which he could build compelling redemptive miracles. Campbell wanted the psi-stories which he published to aim towards the point at which such powers would become the property of competent, right-thinking men who would apply them as a technical skill; Sturgeon, by contrast, aimed his at the spectacular salvation of the lonely, the crippled and the deprived. Campbell wanted to plan the marriage of human society and superhumanity from consummation to completion; Sturgeon was primarily interested in the courtship to which consummation provided a climax and a terminus.

Psi-powers were not the only ideative framework which Sturgeon used in constructing parables of alienation and its transcendence. He wrote strange biological fantasies like "The Deadly Ratio" (1948; also known as "It Wasn't Syzygy"), "The Sex Opposite" (1952) and "The Golden Helix" (1954). He also used alien encounters in such stories as the supremely sentimental "Saucer of Loneliness" (1953) and the taboo-breaking "The World Well Lost" (1953). His first novel, *The Dreaming Jewels* (1950; also known as *The Synthetic Man*) is a mutagenic romance in which alien crystals act as an evolutionary catalyst, their imperfect creations providing the obsessive misanthrope Pierre Monêtre with a set of carnival freaks with which to make his living while searching for their secret. The central character of

the story is a boy who runs away from home after being brutally punished by his adoptive father for what the memorably deceptive first line of the story describes as "doing something disgusting." Suspense is maintained throughout by the paranoid implication that the boy remains under a terrible threat from the substitute father-figure Monêtre until he achieves a maturity far more dignified and far more powerful than his rival's. (Monêtre is, of course, translatable as "my being".)

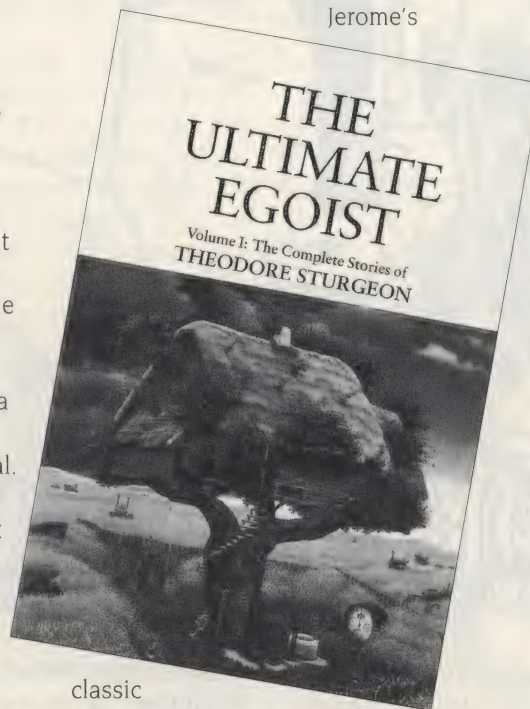
The *psi*-story which remains Sturgeon's most celebrated work is his second novel, *More Than Human* (1953), elaborated by adding an introduction and a conclusion to the novella "Baby is Three" (1952). It tells the story of six individuals, each of whom is a social deviant or outcast and each of whom is possessed of a single supernatural talent. Ineffective in isolation, these talents can be integrated into a marvellously powerful whole when the individuals come together to form an unusual but nevertheless functional "family." The telepathic simpleton who provides the initial linkage is replaced by a delinquent boy who cannot comprehend his situation, but when a psychiatrist enables him to do so he quickly comes to see its true potential. The "gestalt" is sheltered in its early days by a "mother" whose well-meant attempts at the moral education of its members are handicapped by rigidity and intolerance; once the boy understands what is happening he prevents further damage being inflicted in this way, but the reconsolidated group still has to discover a morality of its own before it can be accepted into a community of its own peers.

A similar but much less complex story of paranormal opportunities nearly thwarted by the moral straitjacket of an obsessive mother-substitute is "...And My Fear Is Great" (1953). Similar figures crop up elsewhere in Sturgeon's work of the period, but they are not as terrifying as the freakish and excruciatingly hypocritical father-figures who are their counterpart. The nastiest of these are "Mr Costello, Hero" (1953) and Heri Gonza, in "The Comedian's Children" (1958), who infects children with a disfiguring disease so that he can pose as their guardian and protector.

Almost all Sturgeon's figures of evil are human, the great majority assuming positions of pseudo-parental authority; his aliens are usually benign, like those which he added to "Hurricane Trio" (1955) – originally written as a mundane story when he was trying to break into higher-paying markets – to play the part of a moral *deus ex machina*. Even those aliens which are not benign often end up doing more good than harm.

Alien catalysts which precipitate the redemptive development of human *psi*-powers are featured in two other long stories. "The (Widget), the (Wadget) and Boff" (1955) operates on a modest scale, involving the inhabitants of a boarding-house, and is somewhat reminiscent of Jerome K.

Jerome's



classic tale of angelic visitation "The Passing of the Third Floor Back" (1907), which was the basis of a successful play and a film. *The Cosmic Rape* (1958; also extant in an abridged version, "To Marry Medusa") – a story on which Sturgeon apparently worked for several years after signing a contract in advance – is much more spectacular. It features an alien invader which jumps to the conclusion that the disassociation of human minds is a kind of facultative defence mechanism against the absorption of the species into a cosmos-spanning "hive-mind" which it has come to accomplish. When it sets about "re-assembling" the hive-mind which it assumes to be the natural state of affairs on Earth – bringing an assortment of frightened, suffering,

incompetent individuals into a gestalt much larger than that featured in *More Than Human* – it creates an entity far more powerful than the one of which it is a part.

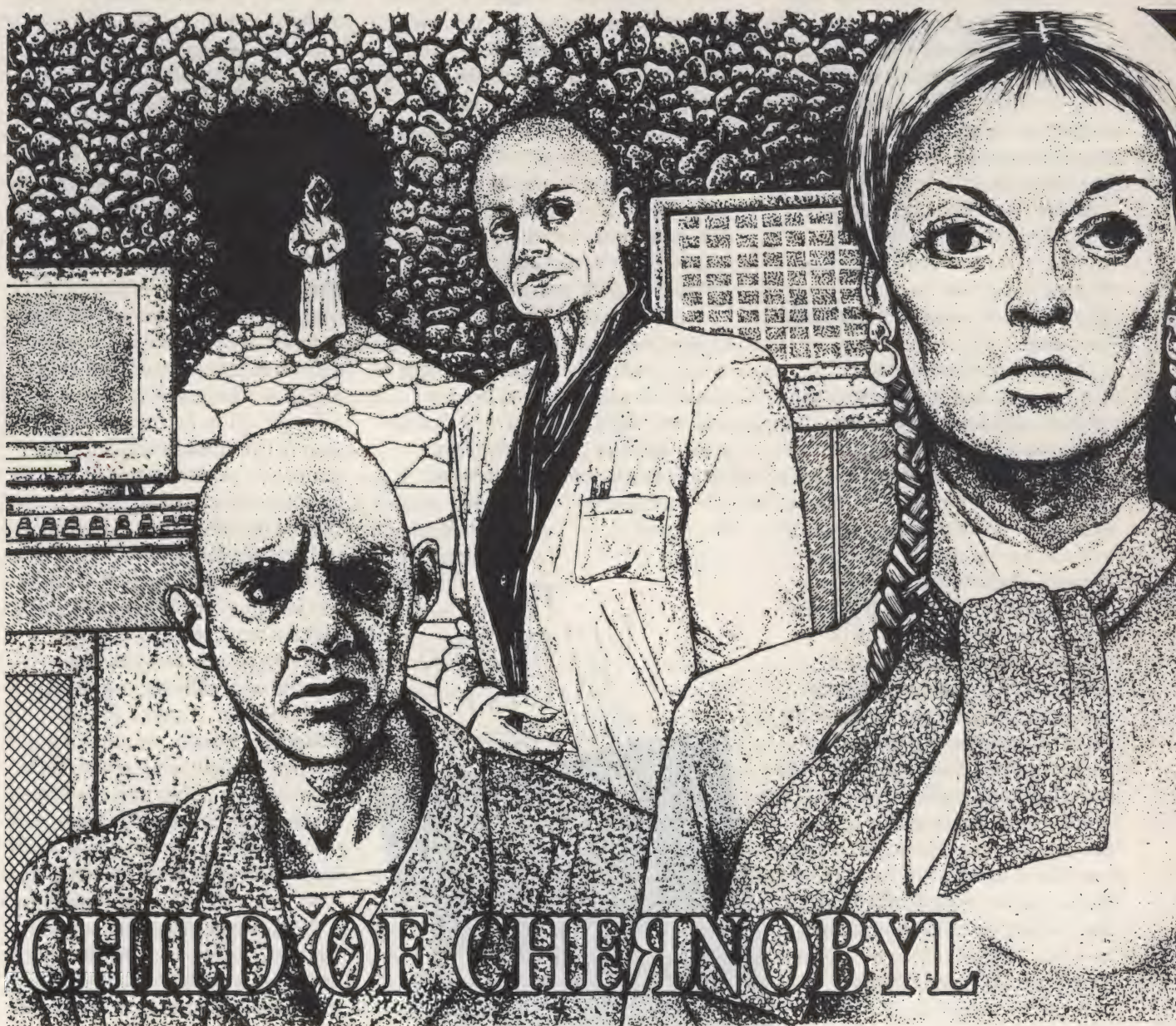
The difficulty which Sturgeon had in completing *The Cosmic Rape* quickly became more generally manifest. In an introduction to "And Now the News..." (1956) in *The Golden Helix* (1979) Sturgeon recalls that he had run completely out of ideas and felt that he desperately needed some new ones in order to rescue his ailing finances; Robert A. Heinlein obligingly sent him a cheque to tide him over and no less than 26 story ideas (including, of course, the perversely memorable one on which that particular story turns). Despite the presence in his work of certain perennial themes Sturgeon did

not like to repeat himself. Unlike A. E. van Vogt, who had pioneered the kind of transcendental metamorphosis story which he brought to a much higher level of sophistication, Sturgeon could not be content to reshuffle old stories or recapitulate their imagery with slight variations. He always wanted to break new ground, artistically and ideatively – but his search for new ground to break became increasingly desperate.

Sturgeon's fourth novel, *Venus Plus X* (1960), is one of the few formal exercises in Utopian design produced within genre sf. The protagonist of the story is seemingly brought out of our own time to examine and pass judgment upon the society of Ledom, in which all physical and social differentiation between the sexes has been eradicated. The question at stake is, of course, the extent to which the difficulties and miseries of our own existence are generated by sexual politics, and it is outstanding among Sturgeon's work by virtue of the fact that it does not assume in advance that any disruption of present-day moral prejudices would be beneficial. Indeed, it is painfully even-handed, to the point where its very indecisiveness seems to constitute a profound disappointment.

By this time Sturgeon's work had become afflicted with a deep pessimism. All of the best stories he produced in his last few years of activity are heart-rending tragedies. Some of them are very fine, like the

Continued on page 55



The light-emitting glands at the ends of Kinzem's fingers flitted over the keyboard and illuminated the crystals. First with light as red as the daystar's, then with violet light, and finally with green, as she entered the genetic code for the viscous film that protected her skin's light receptors from the air. Alien air, she reminded herself. When the transmitted genome was completed, her clone would be created on an alien world.

She lifted a shimmery-skinned hand to wipe away the perspiration crusting on her overlip. With her other hand, she brought a fan-shaped seashell to her mouth and sipped lukewarm red-petal tea.

Old Nakem was such an old-fashioned fool. Kinzem swore with an iridescent light so strong it became almost as white as the shell. The intensity of her own outburst startled the geneticist. She drank more tea to calm herself. Work was what counted now. Personality conflicts were as insignificant as water droplets in the sea. She bent over the transmitter again.

Still, Nakem of all people should support her efforts. He was an astronomer and he'd had the dreams. He knew exactly when the daystar would go nova, but he refused to tell Kinzem. He didn't want to add to her suffering, he'd told her. But it was the not-knowing that tortured. Would her work be

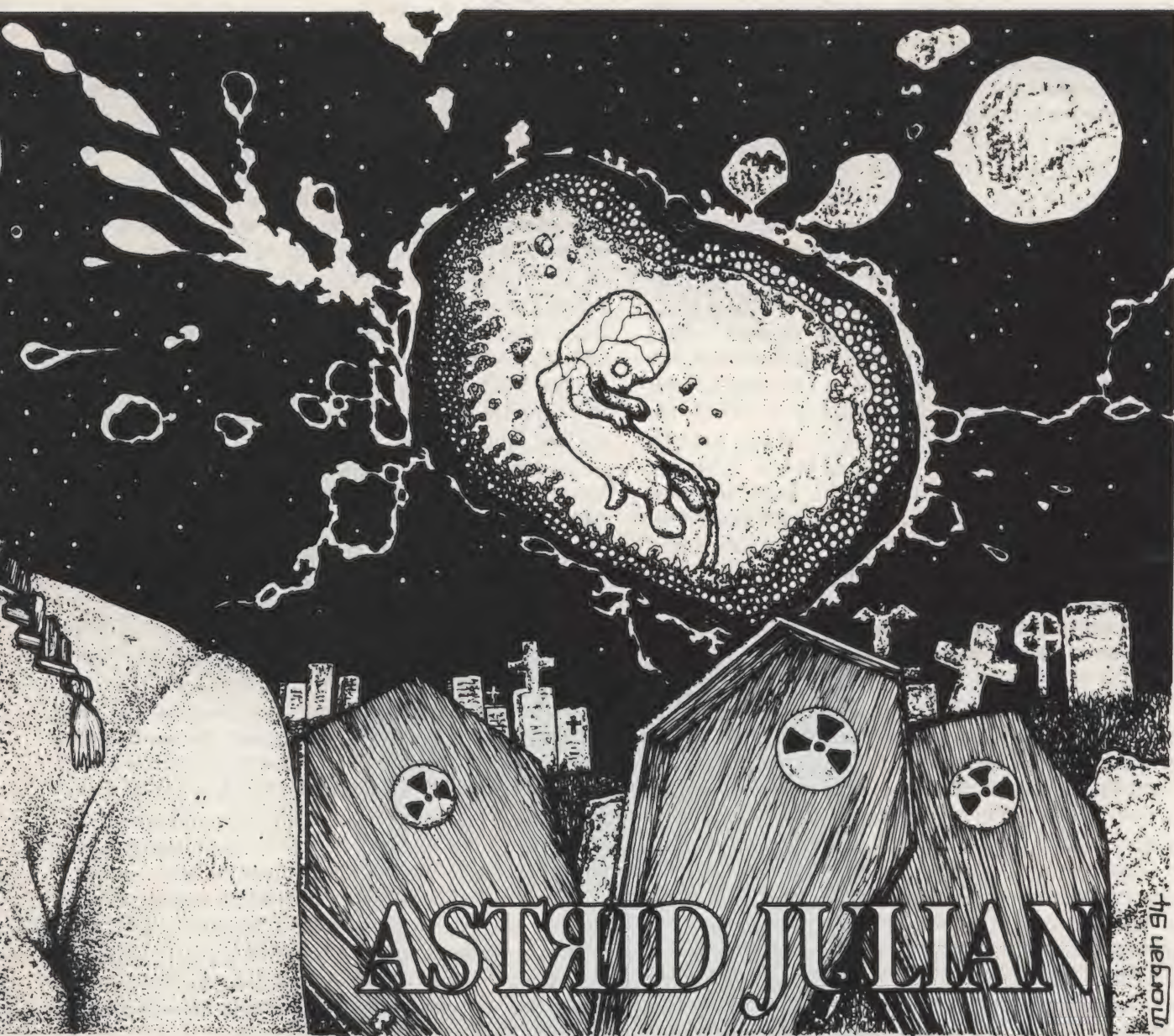
finished before the burst of light from the exploding daystar veiled their own sun with its brightness? She worked like a fevered fool in the hope it would. All her friends, her brothers, even her own parents mocked her on their way to the various end-of-the-world parties.

Perhaps if she'd had children of her own, she wouldn't be so driven. The explosion of sunfire would rob her of so much. She would never suckle her rainbow-fleeced baby daughter, never teach her to take her first steps onto the gaming fields, never help her learn the subtleties of colour that would let her read and write crystal.

Kinzem's dreams had given her only Oksanem, an alien woman lightyears away, and 20,000 years in the future, and a dim hope that Oksanem would be an able enough geneticist to take the transmitted code and transform it into a creature of flesh and light, Kinzem's own daughter clone.

Sometimes, when Nakem raged against her work, Kinzem wasn't even sure that Oksanem would be born, but she forced herself to believe with every cell, with every gene in her body that Oksanem would be real, and that her own dreams were as reliable as the old astronomer's.

"Save yourself, Sister." An American in a dark blue suit waved



ASTRID JULIAN

Illustrations by Russell Morgan
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a Bible in my face. "Accept Jesus Christ as your Saviour now. Don't go into the House of the Idolaters." A woman with tears in her eyes told me that Jesus loved me in miserable Ukrainian. Another woman put her hand on my forearm holding me back, but most of the bible-thumpers contented themselves with waving signs in my face and singing American hymns. They were afraid to touch us then. Afraid that the cancers, God's wrath for our present idolatry, our former atheism, and our perpetual communism would spread to them, the squeaky-clean, God-fearing, capitalist Christians.

I couldn't resist. I pulled off my wig and waved it in their faces, vainly hoping the glint of sunlight on my bald pate would temporarily blind them. Removal of the wig alone was enough to have the desired effect. They left me alone. A path cleared through the crowd and I walked unimpeded to Saint Sophia's, Kiev's largest church.

"Repent, or suffer God's wrath," I heard a voice yell from my left. The Ukrainian was accent-free this time. They were gaining converts. "Jesus loves even you, Oksana Komarova." At the sound of my name, a prickly sensation moved up my spine. It took a great effort of will not to turn around and look. They knew only my name, I told myself. They didn't know my work. I'd been too careful for that. Still waving my wig in their faces

hadn't exactly been circumspect. If only Volodya hadn't seen. He was too paranoid as it was. My wig was back on even before I reached the stone steps.

The wooden doors of St Sophia's rumbled open, spilling sunlight into the dark cathedral. On the marble floor brass inlay, electrified by the noon sun, formed a path of gleaming stars to the dark altar. I was grateful when the heavy doors swung shut, turning off the brass.

Only the Old Russian chants of our own priests and monks echoed through the church's many domes as I hurried past the line of penitents holding water jugs to be blessed by the priests. It amazed me that people flocked to such places in modern Ukraine. After the contamination of the Dnieper's silt by the radioactive topsoil from Chernobyl, the city built skimmers to capture only the clearest, least-contaminated water from the centre of the river. But the people had lost faith in technology, and so they brought their drinking water to the priests.

I usually entered our science complex from behind the monastery, through a secret door leading straight underground, so I couldn't shake the creepy feeling I got whenever I was forced to enter a church or had to pass through a crowd of evangelicals. My mother had been a dedicated communist

who remained proud of her politics until her death, no matter how politically incorrect it became to admit such allegiances. And since Chernobyl, I'd seen so many tiny coffins lying next to so many altars that I would never feel comforted by the smell of incense or the singing of prayers.

I only hoped I was doing the right thing, bringing a scientist in from the West. We needed a fresh face on the team. Even more than that, we needed Western technology and Western money to keep the project going. Ludmilla Zelen-skaya Klein wasn't exactly an outsider, either. Unlike most of the rest of us, she actually had been born in Chernobyl. After the fire she had been evacuated to Kiev, but she spent only a few months here before her parents took her West. I didn't know if she still felt anything for her childhood home. Her parents had sent her back from Berlin to Kiev every summer so she could vacation with her Baba, but she always left again. She never had to spend the rest of the year watching us, Chernobyl's other children die off one by one. She hadn't had to suffer the nosebleeds or the loss of teeth. And while she was accompanied by great parcels of western food on her trips back to Kiev, we ate fruits and vegetables grown in contaminated soil for years after the accident.

We, Ludmilla's playmates, gathered she didn't come back willingly either. Who would, if the tales she told us were true? Her stories of the fabulous wealth of the Germans held us in thrall, and as we ate the creamy Ritter-Sport chocolate bars she brought for us, we all wished our parents could have been engineers or scientists instead of taxi drivers and bakers, and that they could have found jobs in the West too.

Actually, I did get to spend six months in America, when I was twelve. I was part of an experiment with childhood brain cancers at Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore. My mother got to come too, but we weren't allowed to stay. Mother was a bureaucrat, something they already had too much of in America. Besides, her English was pretty miserable, and who needed a Russian-speaking, communist bureaucrat anyway?

Ludmilla's mother developed an artificial heart for the Technische Universitat Berlin. Her father was a violinist who gave private lessons, and eventually ended up concertmaster with the Berlin Philharmonic. Talents enough to remain in the West.

My eyes had trouble adjusting to the darkness inside St Sophia's. It took a few seconds just to make out the inside of the golden dome with its picture of the big-eyed saint.

At the front of the cathedral, I slipped behind the main altar; a tiny ceilingless room of wooden panels carved with flowers and painted gold Volodya was waiting by the side altar where the bones of Yaroslav the Great were buried. Even then, after having known Volodya for many years, his appearance next to the altar startled me. His black head-dress and veils covered the lack of hair, but nothing could be done about the beard. A beardless priest! Still, I envied his not having to bother with wigs and adhesives.

Volodya's gold-embroidered dresses swept across the marble floor as he led the way to the staircase hidden behind a panel of the Madonna holding the Christ in her arms.

My head was perspiring so much it itched. I pulled off my wig again as soon as I was sure we wouldn't be seen by the penitents. The wig looked better under the cathedral's dim light wells. Outside, you could tell the mousey brown hair was thinning and breaking off in places. I'd have to buy a new one soon. This one was starting to look like a wig.

No one knew what caused the baldness. Some of us lost

our hair without ever developing cancer. I hated the pitying glances our old Ukrainian grandmothers would cast my way on the market bus when they realized my wig hid another of Chernobyl's mysterious scarifications. Maybe this time, I'd be brave enough to try a fed wig, or a blonde one. Probably not. I folded my mousey brown one away into my handbag and followed Father Volodya down the stairs into the tunnel.

"She's here," Volodya said. "I think you're making a big mistake, Oksana Komarova." Volodya was always ready to think the worst of anyone and everything. I'd often wondered why. He was so lucky himself. At 43, he'd never actually developed cancer. The radiation contented itself with leaving him beardless and hairless, debilitating enough in an Orthodox priest. Still, it wasn't cancer. I think he felt it was his embracing of the East and of Orthodoxy and his total rejection of the West that protected him. I couldn't be too critical. That rejection of the West kept our project hidden.

"Let me meet with her first." I tried to reassure Volodya. "Don't worry, I won't tell her too much. Not until we've decided."

It hurt when I pulled off my eyebrows and eyelashes. Occasionally a real hair or two managed to sprout on my brow. More often one sprang up, thick and black, on my chin.

I rubbed away filmy bits of latex adhesive that clung to my scalp and forehead with my fingers. My skull was nicely shaped, but I never went into the city without a wig. I couldn't stand having people look down their noses at me just because I'd been caught in freak accident. An accident the children of the Ukraine should have been warned about before they marched in the May Day Parade or played in the radioactive dust. It made me so angry that, in the end, it was easier for me just to pass. Maintaining an attitude was too exhausting. Still, I didn't look bad without the hair.

Poor Volodya didn't fare as well. His eyes were very round, his brow and cheek bones prominent, his teeth slightly protruding. In the dim corridors and caverns under the cathedral he looked like a death's head. Perhaps that was why he was so mistrusting. Because of his frightening appearance, people mistrusted him.

Bald women were currently all the rage in Milan and Berlin. Atomics, the designer called them. I'd seen their rhinestone-encrusted skull caps on television. They wore miniskirts, and over the skirts, three or four overlapping bright blue or pink neon tubes. Tiny lights spun through the tubes and around the women like electrons orbiting a nucleus. The fashions weren't bad looking, but here on the streets of Kiev, with its echoes of Chernobyl, women who shaved their heads to be fashionable acted in poor taste. Women who were naturally bald became objects of pity.

Our meeting room lay under the Golden Gate built almost a thousand years ago by Yaroslav. The walk through the caverns seemed interminable, but that kept the project safe. That, and the fact that priests and monks guarded both the entrance in St. Sophia and the entrance in the monastery of Kiev-Pecherskaya Lavra further down the west bank of the Dnieper.

We met Misha at the end of the Cathedral tunnel. His wig was stuffed into his shirt pocket and he was out of breath, as if he'd run through the caverns all the way from the monastery. I was glad he'd been able to come. He was the team's behavioural psychologist and while I didn't generally believe in psychology (who would with the Soviet record in that area?), Volodya believed in psychology. More to the

point, I knew Misha liked Ludmilla, and Volodya could be more easily swayed in his opinions by Misha than by me.

At the entrance of the tunnel leading into the meeting room sat a monk in a black robe. In spite of the electric lamps overhead, he held a candle in his right hand. With his left hand he traced the words of a prayer in an ancient hymnal. Only the tip of the monk's nose and his chest-length, wispy white beard poked out of his black hood. White embroidered lettering trimmed the edges of the hood. At its centre, over the monk's forehead, a hand-sized cross with three crossbars pointed up at the hood's soft peak.

The monk stopped his chant, closed the hymnal, and lit the way through the short tunnel with his candle. The meeting room had served as a church in ancient times. Its walls still bore centuries-old inscriptions in Old Russian, Polish and Armenian.

"See what I mean?" Volodya whispered to me as we entered. Ludmilla was sitting between my two assistants, Anna and Pyotr. If she agreed to help us, Pyotr would work with her. He was very gifted with computers, and while almost everyone seemed to know English nowadays, Pyotr also spoke fluent German and could help Ludmilla with her correspondence. Ihor, the radio astronomer who now lived in Australia, and who'd first alerted me to the incoming signals sat across the table from them.

Anna, Pyotr and Ihor had all removed their wigs, as was customary whenever we children of Chernobyl met. But Ludmilla sat regally in the metal folding chair. I was sure she didn't mean to, but it was almost as if she was flaunting her success in the West. The hair of her wig was thick, blonde, and straight, combed into two long braids. It was easy to make curly hair look real, but only the most expensive wigs looked good braided. My heart skipped a beat. She was a beautiful, strong Ukrainian peasant woman. One who belonged on the Monument of Reunification.

Perhaps Volodya was right. The West had corrupted Ludmilla. How could she forget how important the removing of our wigs had been when we were children? It was a sign of solidarity in a world too ready to forget us.

Ludmilla stood. "Oksana, *Liebling*," she gushed, not noticing Volodya's wince. "So what's this all about? Why have you brought me back to Kiev?" Her embrace was dutiful and adult. Our teenaged bonding ritual suddenly seemed childish. I felt ashamed that it was being carried out by a group of 40-year-olds, and wished I could sneak off and replace my wig.

I was careful of what I told her about our project, focusing mainly on Ihor's work; how he had noticed patterns in the background radiation while he'd been studying the sky around 1987A; how he'd ordered time on the VLA telescopes in Europe and America; and finally, when he'd requested 30-year-old radio-wave recordings of that area of the sky, how he'd found a few going back to even before 1987A was discovered. When he noticed that the microwave signals could be divided into four subgroups, he thought: DNA. A wild guess, but then so much of astronomy was conjecture, guessing about what the telescopes were actually seeing. The thought of DNA led him to me, a geneticist whose own genes were scrambled into a meaningless mess by radiation treatments for cancer.

I didn't tell Ludmilla anything about Vera or about our little rainbow-coloured Sascha.

Nakem flooded the work room of Kinzem's cave with an

amber glow of apology. "We can't always help our dreams," the astronomer's lightplay tried to console Kinzem. He bowed his head as the light-emitting glands at the ends of his splayed fingers swirled his dream onto the white chalk ceiling. The alien thing Kinzem was depending on to bring her daughter-clone to life belonged to a dying culture herself.

Instead of hating him for distorting her own dreams and her work in such a cruel manner, Kinzem suddenly felt sorry for Nakem. He had been forced to confront her, she realized. The others had left off their party-going long enough to make the old beacon visit her. Kinzem's overlip flapped as she tried to hide her shame at being publicly discussed.

"We have so little time left," Nakem flashed at her. "Your efforts are a useless squandering of your talents."

But Kinzem felt him flicker. She knew that even Nakem felt his protests were pointless with the end so near. She watched his glistening skin dull with sympathy for her, but the colours of his dream continued to bounce back down upon them both.

"Dream sharing is a moral imperative thousands of years old. Suspending it is uncivilized." Nakem's light dance swept on relentlessly to show her how the woman, Oksanem, would die of a horrible disease before Kinzem finished transmitting her genome.

Nakem sat down on a rock that jutted out of the pool in Kinzem's central cavern and into her work room. His fading dream glimmered across the salt water in pastel streaks. He splashed water onto the light receptors of his forearms, a ceremonial gesture to show her that he sincerely wanted her to counter his dream with one of her own.

When she didn't answer, Nakem tried a different tack. "The crystal scans show there will be a storm tomorrow," he told her. "Should be enough cloud cover to dim the daystar and have a daylight picnic on the surface. Come, leave the caves and share the day with us. It might be the last time we'll be able to see the world and ourselves in real sunlight, not just our own body illumination."

Kinzem was tempted. It would be splendid to see the wonders of the surface in daylight again: the daystar at the edge of the ocean, where it hovered, moon-sized, its colour suffused by clouds to a pale pink; and the sun, high above, and even from behind the clouds, still bright enough to silence, with its strong white light, the infernal whining about her refusal to share the elders' dreams. That would be the best part.

When she failed to answer him again, Nakem shrugged his thin shoulders and turned to leave. He climbed slowly down the steps into her pool. The cave darkened as water covered his body. Finally, all that could be seen was a faint greyish-green glow from the concentration of light glands on Nakem's forehead. He sank beneath the lapping waves.

Kinzem remained a black kernel of silence.

Because of her facility with languages and maths, Ludmilla had ended up a cryptographer with a very expensive practice. Even American multinationals sent their security experts to Berlin to have Ludmilla design the access codes and private languages that kept their computers secure from industrial espionage. We might have been able to find another cryptographer in Ukraine (I'd done a good bit of the code-breaking myself), but Ludmilla had what no one else in Ukraine had: access to bigger, faster, Western computers, and money to pay for them.

Still, as Ihor led Ludmilla into our computer room, I couldn't shake the feeling that it was a gamble, betting on a stranger like this. What I was really afraid of, was that she would take our project seriously, and convince the West it was just too important to leave in the hands of inferior Ukrainian scientists. If they didn't send in a UN team to take the project away, hundreds of Western scientists would duplicate our work and steal it away with their faster computers.

I was counting on the fact that Ludmilla was a woman, a childless woman. And, in Germany as in Ukraine, adoption agencies weren't willing to give a child to a parent whose life could end at any time.

In our late teens Vera and I had watched a TV show from America about Chernobyl. Little white radiation burns pocked the film just as the cancer seedlings riddled our bodies. We didn't believe we'd never become mothers ourselves, not then. And perhaps motherhood wasn't something we should even wish for, not when we'd seen so many women of our mothers' generation outlive their own children. Still, it was a part of life, of the Earth, a part we would never share, and we felt cheated. I couldn't speak for Ludmilla, but for Vera and myself. At a time of life when women's thoughts grew away from childbearing, ours focused on it, even secretly hoping that the poisons that made our bodies unreliable would once again play a trick on us and allow us to become mothers in our 40s.

Only here, in the caverns, where the project eclipsed all my other wants, did I feel truly alive. I enjoyed watching Ihor's face light up as he explained his discoveries and his multi-channel spectrum analyzers to Ludmilla. His face seemed to crack open like an egg, revealing the bright-eyed prankster Ludmilla and I both had a love-hate relationship with as girls. You could almost forget about his bone cancer until something really excited him and he started waving the stump that was left of his arm in our faces. Then you had to admire his vitality, and feel stupid for your own whining about being childless and about the creeps who had been sleeping on the job at Chernobyl. It was time to follow his example and live this wonderful life you'd been given.

Ihor's enthusiasm was infectious, and we stood around with big, simple-minded grins on our bald-headed, hairless faces. All of us except Volodya. I could tell what was coming next.

Nakem wasn't going to stop her, Kinzem decided. She'd had her own dream again and this time she was keeping it private. She was breaking law and tradition by not sharing it. She felt Nakem sitting behind her in a corner peering at her back. The sparse receptors on her back dimly showed her the old-ladyish, blue-green-blue colour shift Nakem was absent-mindedly tapping onto the wall next to her transmitter. The colours were reflected more brightly onto her slick-skinned fingers.

He waited for her to finish sending a gene sequence. "You are part of my dream," he flashed. The bright, formal dream-sharing colours painted the air above her transmitter. "My dream shows that the woman's people are too primitive to read your messages without machines."

Kinzem suffused his red warning with a blue shrug. If her people had been able to overcome their distaste for machines, they probably wouldn't be facing extinction now.

"They use incredibly slow vibrations to communicate," Nakem showed her. "And they are not very smart. Unaided, their brains are capable of only the simplest kinds of calcula-

tions. Please, Kinzem don't hurt yourself with this exercise in futility."

He thought she was an idiot, Kinzem realized. She hid her anger. She couldn't show him she'd changed her transmissions to account for the slowness of Oksanem's machines. Nakem would have discovered how she had been keeping her dreams to herself for almost two moon cycles now.

Kinzem added the pastel shadings her dreams had told her about to the transmissions. With Oksanem thousands of light-years away, all she could do was hope her codings would arrive intact. There was no possibility of entering into real, two-way communication with Oksanem and her people, and no way to know if her transmissions would ever be put to use. In spite of Nakem's antagonism, Kinzem welcomed his dream-sharing. His dreams of the future were frequently correct, and while no one had ever attempted to dream thousands of years into the future, Nakem's dreams were a more dependable guide for her work than her own unproven dreams.

This time she had anticipated Nakem and had seen for herself that Oksanem's people were too primitive to deal with the signals all at once. They would need machines to find and record them. The genome was complete now and transmitting automatically. It would continue to do so even after she was no more. Kinzem had split her transmissions into four sub-codes to make it easier for Oksanem's people to capture them.

Volodya's teeth glowed yellow in the candle-light as the doors to the Hall of the Firemen slid open. Inside was a life-sized, non-radioactive replica of what scientists found in the basement of the Number Three Reactor Building at Chernobyl. A ten-metre tall black glass tower. One metre wide at the top, it widened to two metres at the base and looked like a gigantic elephant's foot. The black glass was encrusted by swaths of bright yellow crystals, called Chernobylite. These in turn were slashed by ten-centimetre-wide and half-metre-long crevices that sparkled with greenish-blue and gold crystals.

The black hoods of the monks attending the Foot were embroidered in yellow instead of white. Their mumbled prayers never ceased while Volodya conducted his tour.

Black lava, simulating the lava flow out of the reactor core, lined the walls of the chamber and outlined a series of niches. Inside were the bodies of the Firemen who had knowingly sacrificed their lives in the first hours of the Chernobyl fire. Their sarcophagi lay behind thick, yellow boron glass. Ludmilla's face was tense.

"You know, Ludmilla, you are very privileged to enter this chamber," Volodya said to her. "The vast majority of Ukrainians have never been allowed in." He shifted the emphasis to the word Ukrainian, trying to make Ludmilla feel as though she didn't belong.

Ludmilla didn't get it. She walked up to the glass, transfixed, and stared at the plain wooden coffin in the niche.

Volodya didn't quit. "If it wasn't for these Ukrainian men here, you would have died as a small girl," Volodya told her. "You would never have had the chance to go West and make all that money. You would never have grown up to become ... Frau Klein. I don't know how you found the stomach to do that."

Ludmilla got a startled look on her face, like a young child the first time an adult hit it or said something mean. She might have come back to us out of a sense of duty, but you

could tell she'd always thought she'd done right by us. She'd never dreamed she could be resented.

Anna, Pyotr and Ihor were embarrassed. Ihor leafed through the notes on his clipboard. Anna suddenly remembered something she forgot to tell him and pointed it out on one of the forms he was holding. Misha was getting angry.

Volodya hit Ludmilla again, before she could recover. "How could you marry one of them after all the school field trips to Babii Yar, after seeing where the Nazis shot tens of thousands of Ukrainian Jews?"

Pyotr handed the clipboard to Anna and stood and stared, fascinated by this strange woman who would become his boss if I okayed it. I could tell he was wondering at my ethics, half-believing Volodya's complaints already.

I wanted to say something, but I was too shocked. Misha stepped between Volodya and Ludmilla. Speak, say something, I pleaded silently. Make it stop. Volodya was being an ass. Ludmilla was our last chance. We couldn't wait another 20 years for Ukrainian ingenuity to catch up with the West. The newest little one would die like the two before him.

"You're being unfair, Volodya," Misha said. "All this happened before we were born, before our parents were born."

I could see that their bickering was bringing Ludmilla close to tears. She was looking around the Hall trying to find the way out. I blocked the way and reached for her hand.

"Look at her. She doesn't have anything to say because she knows I'm right. Time and time again, the Germans stab us in the back. Send us their whores to be our czarinas. Give the most fertile land along the Volga to their own settlers. Thirty years living among them has desensitized her, left her speechless." His headcloth swung away from his shoulders as he stepped closer to Ludmilla. He spat out the words. "How could you marry one of *them*?"

I couldn't stand being around people who wasted so much energy hating other people. What a fool I was. How could I have trusted Volodya with the project? Then suddenly I could see why Ludmilla seemed struck dumb. Her silence was a testimony to the respect she felt for her husband.

Well, nothing was stopping me. I'd never met Ernst Klein, but I could tell Volodya a thing or two about him. "Ludmilla's husband is Director of the Berlin Zoo," I said. "His family started the *Berliner Luft* project." That shut him up. *Berliner Luft* was a bunch of Berliners who found German families to take in Ukrainian children every summer. Breathing normal air and eating non-contaminated food and drinking non-contaminated water in Germany reduced the engorged thyroids of more than half the children poisoned by Chernobyl. That was enough to boost their immune systems to nearly normal, and who knew how many bouts of childhood cancer that staved off?

Shy Anna surprised me by delivering the final attack. "Why don't you shut up, Volodya. Enough Ukrainians signed up to help Hitler. We're not all saints."

"You would defend her, Anna Vladimirova. Your grandfather sold his pigs to the Germans and let hungry Ukrainians starve."

"They were going to take them anyway. What could he do?"

"Most Ukrainians recognized the Germans for what they were and stood up to them," Volodya answered. "We have nothing to be ashamed of."

"No. Nothing." Misha stood at Anna's side. "Who were the real cowards, Volodya? Those who put up with the Nazis, the unknown evil? Or those who put up with Stalin, who had



already shot and starved and worked millions to death? Maybe the collaborators just saw a chance to free Ukraine, and maybe they were man enough to take it."

"How dare you, Mikhail Andreevich!" Volodya started in on Misha. "Millions of people died in the Great War."

Misha stopped him. "Yes, my friend, millions died. And I'm sure the Germans did much killing. But a great part of the killing was also done by Stalin and his men to consolidate his power here in the Ukraine and then blamed on the Germans. You do read the papers, don't you?"

I didn't enter the argument. I knew that Misha's great-grandfather had been sent to the camps after serving with the Red Army in East Prussia. Stalin considered him contaminated by Western capitalist ideologues. Who knew what the real reason was. Or even if there was a reason. All I remembered was a very old man with medals on his black suit and a white crocheted shawl over his shoulders, sitting on a park bench complaining how cold he was all the time. Flies used to land on his nose and his eyes, and he never bothered to flick them away. It was just as if he never noticed them. It sent us children into fits of giggles.

Volodya's father too had been sent to the camps, under Andropov, for organizing illegal religious activity.

My own family prospered under Stalin, though I never dare to admit it. My mother might have bragged about being a communist, but I'd seen enough and learned enough to be ashamed. I was sure even my trip to America for cancer treatment was possible in part because my mother was a party member and able to put me on the list, perhaps even bumping a more deserving child off the plane so that I could take his place. Anything was possible in a system that rewarded political orthodoxy above all else. Then too, as a child I'd overheard enough conversations at family celebrations to guess at how Uncle Kolya had gotten his dacha on the Black Sea.

Misha and Volodya knew all this about my family, but only Ludmilla knew my darkest secret. My mother had done more direct harm to the people in this room than any long-since-dead-and-buried Nazis. She had been the one who had decided not to warn the city of Kiev about Chernobyl. She hadn't really understood the dangers. No one had. It had never happened before. She meant well. She hadn't wanted to cause a panic. She must have been hoping for rain to wash the radiation out of the air, or for a windstorm to blow it away, into the wealthy west where they had dosimeters and iodine and money to buy food to replace the irradiated crops.

She told friends I had come down with the flu. I sat at the living room window watching the other children play, outside, for three days, wishing I could be with them. And then she let them march in that May Day Parade. All the children, but not her own daughter. I never understood the lie until the day she died, when she babbled, as her mind wandered on the painkillers.

She took very good care of me while I was sick, even quitting her job. But I think she was relieved when she heard my paediatrician say, "brain cancer." It was an absolution. She could hold up her head and say, me too. The cancer has hit my child too. Ludmilla knew my suspicions about my mother, but she never told anyone and she said nothing now.

Father Volodya was quiet for once, thinking about what Misha said. Then a monk came up him and told him that some American evangelists had arrived with a permit from Kiev City Hall. They wished to lay wreaths at each burial niche

and to pray for the souls of the Firemen. They'd brought their TV crews, of course. Showing the follies of the Evil Empire as well as the evils of graphite reactors meant big programming money back home. The monk also said the evangelists had asked if the monks surrounding the Foot could be moved, or if not, if they could continue with silent prayers during the taping of the programme.

Volodya signalled us to slip out the rear door while his official duties beckoned. I only hoped the evangelists wouldn't guess how extensive the tunnels were, or what the project might be.

Kinzem stared at the crystal scan of the surface. A pink morning mist blurred the line between sea and rocky cliffs. She forced herself to remain calm while Nakem's angry outburst coloured the walls of her living room.

"It's all I can do to keep the people from coming here and drowning you in your own pools." Nakem stormed so furiously that his light emissions blended into a rabid white.

"At least that would be a change from their endless end-of-the-world parties," Kinzem flashed back sarcastically. Nakem tried not to show it, but Kinzem could tell by the sudden dimming of his light that she had shocked him.

"That attitude was spawned in the dark." He fumed the old cliché at Kinzem then turned away from her, towards the crystal scan. The ordinariness of the day outside must have reminded him of how few days they had left. Nakem's anger dimmed and he suffused Kinzem's quarters with a golden warmth. "Try to see it their way. If you hadn't kept your dreams private, if you hadn't turned to these machines..." He illuminated her transmitter. "If you had just tried to bear your share of the pain as all our dreams end..." Nakem's light faded.

Kinzem knew he hated berating her so close to the end. It was only the public outcry that had driven him there.

"Instead you focused only on your own small misery at never becoming a parent," Nakem continued with rapid orange-pink colourshifting.

Kinzem's overlip flapped listlessly.

"If the energy you put into your private dreams had been available for the public welfare, many believe the public dreams might have found the inspiration to save the race," Nakem showed her in bright bursts of light.

Kinzem had nothing to say. Even though she had only the singular power of her own untested dreams, she knew Nakem was wrong. Hers was now the only way. She listened quietly as Nakem berated her plans. "The civilization she was transmitting her genome to was not evolved enough to make use of the millions of pieces of information. What kind of misshapen creature would be created by scientists on a world that had only a primitive glimmering into genetics? How could she allow that to be done to herself? For she was, after all, sending her own body across the galaxy. How lonely that other self would be with nobody to dreamshare with!"

Nakem insisted Kinzem use her abilities to ease the road into oblivion for her fellow creatures, to share the dreaming on her own world.

But, even as she promised Nakem her obedience, she vowed to herself to find a way to continue her work. Nakem hadn't dreamt the dream of Oksanem's marvellous thinking machines. She would continue her transmissions. Late at night. During poetry displays. Nakem couldn't watch her all the time.

And she would send dreams so her daughter-self wouldn't be quite so lonely. Dreams of science and technology from her own library. Dreams of simple sharings and sharings made difficult from her parents' library. Perhaps the transmissions could even be automated to send volumes from the entire lending circle around the bay.

We voted. Ludmilla was in, if she wanted to be. Only Volodya voted against her. Since he wasn't involved in any of the scientific work, I didn't think it would have much of an effect on camaraderie. Pyotr had a struggle making up his mind, but I had no doubt that just working with Ludmilla and finding out what kind of a person she was would help him overcome any lingering objections.

Question was, what would she think of our project? Would she say yes to helping us? And even more importantly, would she help us financially?

I tried to ignore my own doubts about the project. On the third try, we had almost gotten the physiology worked out. A little fine tuning had been needed, that was all. And if number three died, I was certain there would be a viable number four. The aliens had sent us more than a recipe for building one of their kind. Vast amounts of information were still being received. Who knew what else they were transmitting? That's what we wanted Ludmilla to find out for us.

I hoped this union of Ukrainians and aliens would work out better than our political alliances had in the past. It suddenly frightened me, this course I was choosing for my country. Whenever Ukrainians allied themselves with other groups, it seemed to hurt them as a nation. Poles, Russians, Germans, they all had had a turn at keeping Ukrainians repressed.

I walked with Ludmilla down the long corridor to Vera's lab – the nursery.

Nakem wore a ceremonial tunic to dim his light glands. His tail whipped out from under the tunic. An impatient gesture, Kinzem decided, as if he couldn't wait for the end of the world. A pitiful, animal gesture, it disgusted Kinzem to see it after moon cycles spent with only the perfection of her frequencies and the cool impartiality of her crystals.

"Three days," Nakem's fingers splashed a rainbow on the floor at Kinzem's feet. "Your family has sent me to ask if you will share their last moments."

Kinzem was overcome with guilt. "I'm greatly honoured by your concern for me and my family," Kinzem turned the room a deep and respectful shade of blue. When she thought of how much she loved her father and how much she admired her mother! Why didn't they understand? Perhaps she should have sent her mother's or her father's genome? Couldn't they see that sending herself was like sending them both? Didn't they know that she desperately wanted to be with them, especially now that the party-going was over and people were splitting up into family groups to dream again their most pleasant memories?

Would her brothers think of her tenth summer, when they sailed after her, across the bay and through a maelstrom of coloured protests from their parents? Did her parents remember the pride they felt that their children were the youngest to ever sail across the bay?

Now her transmissions would be their legacy as well as hers. Why didn't Nakem stop his whining? Couldn't he see that she ached to be with her family?

"In all the histories of all the civilized species of our



planet," Nakem said to her, "none has ever created life from the raw data describing the genome of another species. Such an undertaking would require thinking matrices with the complexity of living beings. This alien civilization to which your Oksanem belongs doesn't have an advanced enough technology to carry out your plans."

"I must do what I must do," Kinzem told Nakem. "Please tell my family they honour me with their requests for my presence. The last thoughts I think, the last dreams I dream, will be of them." She bathed her room with blue light as Nakem left for the final time.

On the last day she sent her dreams of her brothers and of her parents and of how painful it was to be separated from them. Kinzem wanted the new little one to know her creation had been worth a bit of pain. She had been loved that much.

Sound told Kinzem that the end had arrived at last. Echoes of the explosion caused by photons pounding the surface of the planet rippled up into her cave. Water splashed up out of the entry pool, flooding her home in seconds.

Kinzem swam out quickly through the warm water, telling herself there was still time for a last glimpse of the surface before the atmosphere and the ocean were sucked off into interstellar space.

Instants later the heat began. The surface wasn't the fiery, steamy inferno she had imagined. The sky was an even, deep blue tinged with red. It seemed strange not to see the red disc belonging to the daystar floating on the ocean's surface.

The light receptors on her back, which faced the ocean, hurt terribly, even though the swelling water and rocky islands out in the bay were deflecting the radiation. It would take several minutes longer for the sun to be enveloped in the expanding gas shell, but it was still barely visible in the brightness.

Kinzem looked at the sandy beaches and the cliffs surrounding the bay. A hot wind was drying the mucous layer covering her now silent white light glands. Black water pounded up onto beaches that glowed eerily blue in the hot ultraviolet. On the far shore were four dark dots she tried desperately to pretend were her family. She had time to wave an arm in final greeting before she collapsed in the heat.

In the few seconds before the heat melted the flesh from her bones, a glowing, lighter blue wave of neutrinos flashed through the purple air barely slowing on its path through the planet and onward, on to the Earth.

No longer sure of her welcome, Ludmilla stiffened as Vera gave her the traditional kiss on both cheeks and opened the door to the nursery. It was warm and moist and dark.

Vera showed her the slides and explained the autopsies of our first deformed attempts at creating an alien lifeform. The deformities reminded us all of the human and animal babies born in the years following Chernobyl. Many of them hadn't been viable either. Ludmilla said nothing. No words of regret or of comfort for Vem, the woman who tried to help the little beings live, but who ended up having to help them die.

Was I mistaking coldness for respect? Perhaps I had misjudged this woman named Ludmilla Klein. We'd lost her to the rich West long ago, and now she would reveal what was being born in our caverns and the Pope would condemn us and fundamentalists of all faiths would create an outcry to stop us.

Vera led the way to incubation room A soft greenish-golden light pulsed out of the incubator. I heard Ludmilla suck in her

breath as Vera lifted the alien and cradled it, stretching the little body out for Ludmilla to see.

Ludmilla's hand trembled as she reached with her fingers to stroke the pink furball in Vera's arms. Then she moved her fingers up to her nose to smell them, as if drinking in the essence of the alien child.

Finally she spoke. "Your computers aren't good enough, Oksana. Too slow. You'll never pick up the patterns in all the random noise with them. Not in your lifetime."

She grabbed a clipboard and pencil from Vera's desk. "See if Pyotr can get my office on the phone. Have him tell my secretary I've decided to extend my vacation a few weeks. I'll call him tomorrow to fill him in."

She looked up from her clipboard and at me. "German data-carriers and storage media are good enough but the best computers are made in America. We'll have to be careful. We can put the word out on what we're after. Find some things on the black market. Might take a while, but we'll have the internal guts sent to us bit by bit. Then with a little Ukrainian ingenuity..." She winked at me. "We'll save our little one this time."

She slipped her fingers under her expensive blonde wig, ripped it from her head and flung it onto the floor. With her yellow high-heeled pump, she kicked it into a dark corner of the nursery cave. Ludmilla Zelenskaya had come home.

Astrid Julian made quite an impression on many *Interzone* readers with her first story for us, "Irene's Song" (issue 69). She lives in Lakewood, Ohio, and has contributed a few other pieces to original anthologies.

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interzone SCIENCE FICTION
AND FANTASY

Stableford on Sturgeon

Continued from page 45

dying astronaut story "The Man Who Lost the Sea" (1959), but they represented a change of narrative direction whose effects were bound to be dispiriting. The novella "Need" (1960) is one of the best of his *psi*-stories, but it is also one of the most harrowing; here the possession of a superhuman sensitivity becomes an alienating force in its own right, and the self-knowledge which the protagonist gains by virtue of his association with the empath is coldly unflattering. In "Like Young" (1960) a vision of the evolutionary future suggests that it might – and perhaps ought – to belong to a species other than mankind. Most strikingly of all, in the brilliant short novel *Some of Your Blood* (1961) the hapless man alienated by his vampiric inclinations finds that his ingenious solution to his problem can provide only a temporary respite before attracting a more exaggerated opprobrium.

This phase of activity concluded, so far as science fiction was concerned, with the publication of an aborted novel, "When You Care, When You Love" (1962), which seemingly had not the impetus required to carry through to a planned conclusion asserting that love – aided and abetted by new technologies – might even contrive to conquer death in the interests of healing loneliness and frustration.

Sturgeon continued to publish short-story collections during the 60s, including some previously-unpublished stories in *Sturgeon in Orbit*, but such original material as he produced was mundane hackwork, including an Ellery Queen novel, *The Player on the Other Side* (1963), and a novelization of the Western movie *The Rare Breed* (1966). (He had done such work before, but only as a sideline.) When he briefly returned to more significant literary labours in 1969-70 most of what he wrote was carefully marginal in its science-fiction content, and most of it was aimed at the higher-paying markets he had failed to reach – in spite of his best efforts – in the 1950s.

When the greater part of this new work was collected, along with the delusional fantasy "To Here and the Easel" (1954), in *Sturgeon is Alive and Well* (1971) the author hopefully claimed in his introduction that this

period of inactivity would prove – like the one of 1941-46 – to have been a period of gestation: "a silent working out of ideas, of conviction, of profound selection." It did not; instead, it decayed with remarkable rapidity into a deflated pessimism unilluminated by the lyricism of the stories of a similar ilk he had published in 1959-60. Like the sickly fable "Brownshoes" (1969), the award-winning "Slow Sculpture" presumes that miraculous inventions which might alleviate many of the miseries of mankind are being suppressed by the vested interests of established industries and professions; the hope that the heroes of both stories might be redeemed by love is undoubtedly honest but dramatically enfeebled. "Occam's Scalpel" (1971), in which the inheritor of an industrial empire is equipped with an ecological conscience by trickery, is wryly conscious of its own sad absurdity.

One of the two long stories Sturgeon produced in this period, "Case and the Dreamer" (1972), is obviously another aborted novel patched up as a novella. The other, "If All Men Were Brothers, Would You Let One Marry Your Sister?" (1967) was written for Harlan Ellison's *Dangerous Visions*. Ellison was later to badger Sturgeon into producing another long story for his shared-world anthology *Medea* (1985), "Why Dolphins Don't Bite." Both these stories are curious moral parables which suggest – with a wild optimism which is as unappealing as it is unconvincing – that Utopia might be just around the corner if only humans were capable of abandoning their ridiculous prejudice against (in the first instance) incest or (in the second) cannibalism. As a means of symbolizing the confining limitations of social mores and the dependence of progress on an open mind this *modus operandi* compares very unfavourably with that employed in *More than Human* or *Venus Plus X* and the extent to which Sturgeon had moved away from the Campbellian outlook which once ensnared him is evident in the insistence of the latter story that technology, however marvellous, can only ever be a consolation prize for human beings incapable of true community.

Towards the end of his life Sturgeon was endeavouring to lay out a comprehensive summary of his

prospectus for moral reform in a long religious fantasy called *Godbody*, but the version of it which eventually saw publication in 1986 – leading to a conclusion whose form is entirely appropriate but whose swiftness is absurdly premature – is but a tiny fraction of the projected whole.

Theodore Sturgeon was a writer of considerable eloquence whose best stories are intensely gripping; they force the reader to identify empathetically with characters who are as different from the stereotyped heroes of pulp fiction as one could imagine, and instil a fervent yearning for the salvation of those characters. The problem with any story which manifests this kind of artistry is that nothing short of a miracle will suffice as a satisfactory climax, and Sturgeon was too wise and too honest to forget or permanently set aside the knowledge that it is all too easy for a writer to provide such miracles. He always found it more comfortable writing fantasy than science fiction – and if rational plausibility is accepted as a criterion of qualification it must be admitted that almost all of his so-called science fiction is really lightly-jargonized fantasy – but he did have a well-developed science-fictional conscience, which made him ambitious to do more than compose consolatory fairy tales.

All writers have godlike power over their imaginary worlds, but those who specialize in fantastic fictions also have a ready-made apparatus which allows them to redeem any situation with a casual flourish. Sturgeon was always suspicious of the corrupting effects of this absolute power, as all those who seek to use it responsibly and constructively have to be; his conscience kept getting the better of him, insisting that it was unworthy of him simply to keep on producing reckless and essentially false eucatastrophes to answer the problems of his characters. That conscience was probably the real source of his "blocks," and however much his loyal readers might regret the effect those blocks had on his productivity we ought at least to consider the possibility that had he been capable of doing things differently he would have been a poorer writer and a less admirable man.

Brian Stableford

Twilight of the Gods

Paul J. McAuley

Stripped of the various political agenda which seem to attach to it like barnacles to a whale, the basic premise of hard sf is that it takes the spirit of scientific enquiry seriously. Its plots are based on what is known about the Universe, and its extrapolations are firmly based on current scientific theories. Scaffolded by this framework of rational disquisition, most American hard sf portrays humanity's unstoppable outward urge with gung-ho cheerfulness: humans are the most dangerous animals in the universe, and the Universe better get used to it. But in British hard sf, and in particular the transcendental novels of Arthur C. Clarke, humans are as children to the Wise Old Aliens who long ago have reordered the universe to their own ends. The intersection that allowed (unfavourable) commentary on Earth from the point of view of the omnipotent Culture in Iain Banks's *The State of the Art*, or the bathos of Earth's demolition to make way for a hyperspace highway in Douglas Adams's *Hitchhiker* novels, similarly make the point that human hubris is a mere pipsqueak in the grand order of things.

Stephen Baxter's Xeelee Sequence is a British hard-sf future history more ambitious than most, for its novels and short stories chronicle the entire history of a universe dominated by the mysterious and apparently all-powerful Xeelee, masters of time and space. *Ring* (HarperCollins, £15.99) brings to a close (but is not a closure of) the sequence. Structured as a long dying fall, it is a quest for the key to understanding the plans of the godlike Xeelee, and deploys Baxter's wide-ranging knowledge of quantum theory and cosmology with scrupulous particularity. It is a threnody for the universe itself – or at least, for the bright spume of the baryonic matter that comprises all we apprehend, from stars to starlings, from galaxies to grains of sand. For *Ring* is also a chronicle,

told backwards like a murder mystery, of the final clash between dark and light, between the lords of baryonic matter and the creatures of the invisible sea of dark matter which makes up the bulk of the universe.

In a previous book in the sequence, *Timelike Infinity*, a glimpse through a wormhole revealed that in five million years the Universe would be dying of premature old age. The Superet cult, whose creed (that anything not prohibited by the laws of physics is possible once the engineering problems can be overcome) and mission (the long-term survival of humanity) echo the gung-ho attitude of American hard sf, launches a two-pronged investigation. Lieserl, born human but adapted for immortality within the software of a probe in the depths of the Sun, investigates abnormalities in the Sun's fusion processes. And a colonyship, towing a wormhole interface through which the past can peer at the future, is sent out on a subluminal roundtrip that will last a thousand subjective years and five million years of real time.

In that five million years, meanwhile, Lieserl discovers that the core of the Sun is inhabited by dark-matter "birds"; it is their interference which is rapidly aging every star in the universe. When the ship returns, the descendants of its crew and three of its original designers, two alive and one now a computer-stored personality, find that they are all that is left of humanity. The Solar System is littered with the remains of the final battle between humans and Xeelee, and the Universe is empty of baryonic life, its Galaxies full of dying stars and strewn with the remains of the final battles between the Xeelee and the dark-matter birds. Lieserl, who has established a fragile communication with the birds, joins the surviving humans. Using the hyperspace drive of an abandoned Xeelee fighter, they set off across the ancient battlefields of the universe to try and discover what happened to the Xeelee.

Baxter's epic vistas of space and time are deeply convincing and finely drawn, and he deploys all the wonders and paradoxes of modern cosmology with enormous intelligence, skill and understanding. Like a proper scientific mystery, the novel is driven by a quest for the ultimate knowledge of life, the universe, and the universes beyond, but there's very little else to the plot. In the first and last parts of the novel, as Baxter sets up the problem and then brilliantly resolves it, this works wonderfully well, but the middle section, particularly a confusing fizzle of a shipboard revolution, does have its longueurs, and there's a feeling that the struggle between religious fanatics who have forgotten the ship's mission and the faction led by the ship's surviving designers is thrown away.

Yet the accelerating sense of wonder as the consequences of vast manipulations of space and time are uncovered carries the reader along. Baxter's characters may be mostly from stock (the exception is Lieserl, although she quickly becomes more than human), but as they struggle to master their situation they perfectly mirror the reader's own growing sense of wonder. Baxter doesn't need the italics with which he liberally peppers his text; the awe his extrapolations generate is real enough.

Bruce Sterling's *Heavy Weather* (Millennium, £15.99) is a sharp, coolly ironic, but structurally flawed take on the Faustian pact between society and technology, in which Sterling deploys his talent for explicating the complex political and social consequences of technology, particularly information technology, to fine effect. But while his depiction of a switched-on post-cyberpunk future is crammed with sensuous and authentic detail, the novel's exhilarating rush blows itself out prematurely. Rather than any plot, it is Sterling's depiction of a future that is at once

strange and recognizable, and so complex that even its inhabitants find it unsettling, that gives the novel its momentum.

It is the middle of the next century, and the world's weather is wrecked by global warming. Janey Unger, a Texan heiress, rescues her brother, Alex, from a Mexican clinic where he is trying to cure himself of congenital bad health by, amongst other things, lung enemas. Janey has fallen in love with a renegade scientist who leads a gang of weather freaks, the Storm Troupers. The Storm Troupers are chasing the ultimate tornado across the Texas badlands, an F6 of such intensity it could become self-perpetuating, and Janey thinks the experience will do Alex good; in a way she doesn't foresee, she turns out to be right.

But although the Troupe eventually catches up with an F6 storm, it isn't as worldshattering as the build-up promises (or as portrayed in John Barnes's *Mother of Storms*, an alternative although more conventional take on bad weather in a world saturated with information technology). And at the height of the storm Sterling introduces a disjunctive plot twist that destroys the tension of the narrative, leaving an ending that is more like a coda rather than a genuinely earned closure.

During the storm, Janey is rescued by her lover's brother (who has been tailing the troupe on the rather weak premise that he wants to say goodbye to his long-estranged brother before disappearing), and taken to a shelter where members of a secret worldwide conspiracy are hiding out, taking advantage of the radio silence caused by the storm to free themselves of the explosive manacles which are token of their membership.

The conspiracy, open to all who can riddle clues to its existence planted on the Internet, is committed to reducing the world's population by actively enhancing the winnowing of humanity by natural disaster and by disease. Sterling may have intended to contrast the moral cost of the conspiracy's abuse of information technology with the Troupe's open, freewheeling ethos, but thesis and antithesis never quite connect. Like the F6, which in the end simply swallows itself, the novel collapses into happy endings for Alex and for Janey and her lover, both in different ways oiled by money which provides the kind of shelter from the storm that, as Sterling elsewhere makes clear, is denied to so many.

Nevertheless, *Heavy Weather* is a marvellous take on the near future, drawing on Sterling's experiences in the wonderland of information technology industries and the wilder fringes of Cyberia (some of which are chronicled in his non-fictional *The Hacker Crackdown*). His portrayal of the zeitgeist of those who must live with the legacy of the

runaway technologies of the 20th century is sharp and affecting, weaving together a convincing and unsentimental portrait of fringe culture in a highly connected world. One night around their campfire, the Storm Troupers take turns to make their guess as to when the human race lost control over its own destiny. The role call, ranging from the Gulf War, the First World War, the failure of the United Nations or of the French Revolution to 1960s radicalism, is affecting because everyone is right and no one is right, and because it touches a chord that everyone in the last half of the last decade of the last century of the Millennium must recognize: it's too late to stop now. And that is what gives this intelligent but oddly truncated novel urgency, poignancy and a measure of anger.



Merlin's Wood

(HarperCollins, £15.99) is a self-contained short novel that Robert Holdstock has grown from a seed buried in his last Mythago novel, *The Hollowing*, collected with two independent short stories which echo its themes. The eponymous wood is in Brittany, smaller but as resonant and haunted with the stuff of myths as Ryhope Wood of the Mythago cycle. And as in the Mythago sequence, the story is one of a quest for Vision at the heart of the world, where redemption can be earned.

Martin and Rebecca (who was adopted into Martin's family) fall for each other at

their mother's funeral and soon set up house as man and wife. But their child, born blind, deaf and dumb, is a reincarnation of Vivien, the enchantress who entombed Merlin after stealing his secrets. Gradually, the child steals Rebecca's senses until she, maddened, drowns them both. It is only by the literal excavation of the myth which doomed his wife and child that Martin can save them.

Holdstock expertly and movingly fleshes the bones of Arthurian legend in this tale of magic and loss. For him, the past is not lost but is buried in the earth, waiting to be reawakened. Earth is the mother to whom we all return, and excavation a rebirth of the raw stuff of our fictions, which can only be understood by surrender of self to ritual. *Merlin's Wood* and the two short stories — one the tale of a time-travelling archaeologist who gradually unravels the deep link which neolithic temple builders make with

the earth; the other a fresh take on the legend of the Selkies, or seal people, of the Scottish coasts — are sinuous, powerful and wise.

Archangel (Gollancz, £14.99) is the sequel to Garry Kilworth's first horror novel, *Angel*, and again features the dogged pair of San Francisco detectives, Dave Peters and Danny Spitz, in an apocalyptic conflict between Heaven and Hell. In the first novel, an angel, regardless of the humans it killed by accident, took upon itself to rid the Earth of demons which had fled the war between Heaven and Hell. That angel, which Peters and Spitz helped destroy, is now a demon, determined to wreck a conference in London that may unite all religions, and which is protected by a dome of impenetrable radiance cast by an archangel.

Archangel is more conventional than its predecessor, a straightforward struggle between the detectives, who are aided by a mysterious woman who may be a manifestation of the archangel's power, and the demon, who possesses the body of one of the British policemen helping the two Americans. Kilworth displays virtuoso inventiveness in depicting the destruction wrought by the demon, which includes a visitation of the Seven Plagues of Egypt upon the hapless Londoners, but the plot remains stubbornly episodic. Too often, each chapter starts with an explosion of gore and then fades to a discussion between the protagonists about what they should do next, spiced with a few gratuitous nasties from the demon. Further, the often considerable power of Kilworth's apocalyptic scenes of death and destruction is weakened by an overly sentimental treatment of the two detectives' friendship (although Kilworth nicely contrasts their frail human goodness with

the demon's almost narcissistic revelry in evil) and a clichéd depiction of the culture shock which Americans experience when confronted with English inefficiency and bad coffee. The novel never quite gets the momentum its central idea deserves, but the final lines promise a sequel in which, perhaps, Kilworth can redeem his marvellous dramatization of spiritual conflict.

D.G. Compton takes, of all things, a soundbite of John Major's ("We understand too much and punish too little") as his inspiration for *Justice City* (Gollancz, £14.99), a near-future novel remarkable for the unswerving ferocity of its depiction of a milieu in which small-minded intolerance is given full reign. The eponymous Justice City

is the first and foremost of the Punishment and Protection Centres in which punishment is meted out with a chilling dystopian precision. Inmates, dosed with tranquillizers and amnesiac drugs, are subjected to a regime of pain-inducing Extreme Audio-frequency Treatment: they are tortured to satisfy the public demand for punishment, but can't remember being tortured. The question unasked by those responsible for the treatments is the effect their work has on them.

One of a new batch of inmates, a vicious gang-lord sentenced for rape and murder, is killed by an overdose while he is being processed. Chief Inspector Alec Duncan is given the task of quickly finding who amongst the four suspects, three nurses and an old lag given a sinecure job, is the

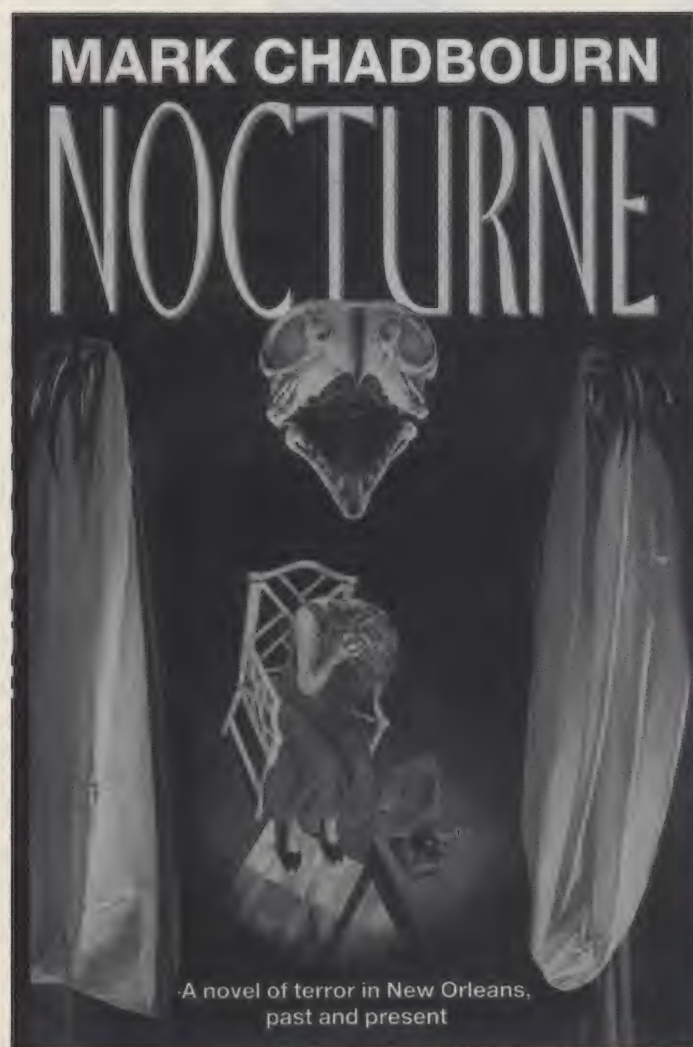
murderer. At the centre of the narrative is not the need to solve the murder, however, but what Alec Duncan, who is the novel's moral conscience, will do once he learns the truth, made more urgent by the guilt he bears for the murder of his girlfriend by a junkie he helped.

Justice City, with its vividly precise depiction of a sterile and morally blank institution, effectively deploys Compton's talent for using the near future (here, no more than a few years away) as a device for amplifying the ethical conflicts of the present. It is an economically swift and tightly plotted thriller driven by a polemical examination of the moral implications of harnessing science to satisfy the smug righteousness of the moral majority. Recommended.

Paul J. McAuley

Ancient Evil

Brian Stableford



Horror fiction takes it for granted – as it has to do, more or less by definition – that supernatural irruptions into the everyday world are threatening, destructive and evil. In an age of rigorous sceptical enquiry such as ours ought to be, however, that which is taken for granted inevitably becomes uncomfortable, troubling to the conscience of the intellect. Intelligent horror fiction is compelled to worry about the whys and wherefores of that fundamental assumption. *Why* are such irruptions so viciously inimical to humankind? *Why* does the source from which they emanate operate in such a perversely inefficient fashion? These are questions which horror novels rarely address directly (to do so would be injurious to the effect which they are trying to sustain) but they lurk in the background; even the most relentlessly-paced and tightly-focused narrative tends to be spiced with uneasy over-the-shoulder glances at the philosophical shadows where the *sense* of the story ought to be.

The traditional answer to the questions is simple enough; it is the Devil who is, by definition, the source of all the evil in Christendom, made so inefficient by the mysteriously haphazard mercy of his divine adversary that he has to rely on occasional possessions and pacts to do his work. Some such diabolical pact, we are assured, has been forged in the distant past of *Covenant with the Vampire* by Jeanne Kalogridis (Headline, £16.99), the first volume of a trilogy which will, when complete, form a "prequel" to Bram Stoker's *Dracula*. The first volume, set in 1845, tells the story of Arkady Tsepesh's return from London to Transylvania to claim the dubious inheritance left to him by his dead father: the duty of protecting and sustaining "Uncle Vlad," who is a lot older and a lot nastier than he looks.

The reader, forewarned by many a meaningful sign even if he or she has skipped the blurb, might find it a little tedious waiting for Arkady and his young wife (one of those "spirited gels" who inhabit almost all historical novels penned by modern women) to catch on to the true nature of the "covenant" to which they never asked to be bound, and might be disappointed (but not in the least surprised) that as soon as the

revelation sinks in the narrative signs off with a "see you next volume" flourish, but the book retains a certain fascination nevertheless. I doubt that we will ever be told the Devil's side of the story (What exactly is he expecting to get out of the pact? Why on earth choose Uncle Vlad when there are so many *interesting* people in the world who would be only too ready to make more rewarding pacts?) but all the poking around in the past and disinterring of ancient atrocities is conducive to a certain amount of fruitful wondering.

The problem is, of course, that setting up the Devil as the source of all evil isn't really an *explanation* at all; it's a blatant fudge, like saying that laudanum puts you to sleep because of its soporific effect. Nor is there much mileage any more in trying to explain how the Devil got to be the way we imagine him to be, given that anyone with an ounce of sense can see that he is the hero, not the villain, of *Paradise Lost*. In our secularized age it seems to make more sense to posit detheologized *entities* of some inconceivable kind, which just happen to be somewhere around, and just happen to be incredibly nasty, and just happen to conduct their affairs with human beings in the kind of tortuously silly fashion which requires them to assemble gangs of ritual magicians who have to commit long strings of murders *just so* using *exactly* the right kind of human instruments until *exactly* the right point in time arrives when spouting *exactly* the right kind of mumbo jumbo will...

Actually, of course, it won't, because in this kind of horror story there's always some Everymanesque klutz of a hero who knows nothing and understands nothing but who is nevertheless enabled by the author's absolute power of *deus ex machina* to throw a spanner in the works. That, at least, is how Mark Chadbourn's *Nocturne* (Gollancz, £5.99) works – and actually works quite well, by carefully arranging all its artifices (the hero's amnesia, the legendary lost jazz record, the krewes of New Orleans, etc, etc) to the single purpose of keeping the reader in bewildered ignorance until the plot (after much dithering) finally gathers enough speed to zip through its hectic mess of implausibilities and absurdities without allowing pause for thought. The kind of reader who reads in order to be able to stop thinking rather than to be encouraged to start will find it an entirely acceptable and enjoyable piece of nonsense. As for the kind of reader who thinks that there ought to be more to the reading experience than textual laudanum....

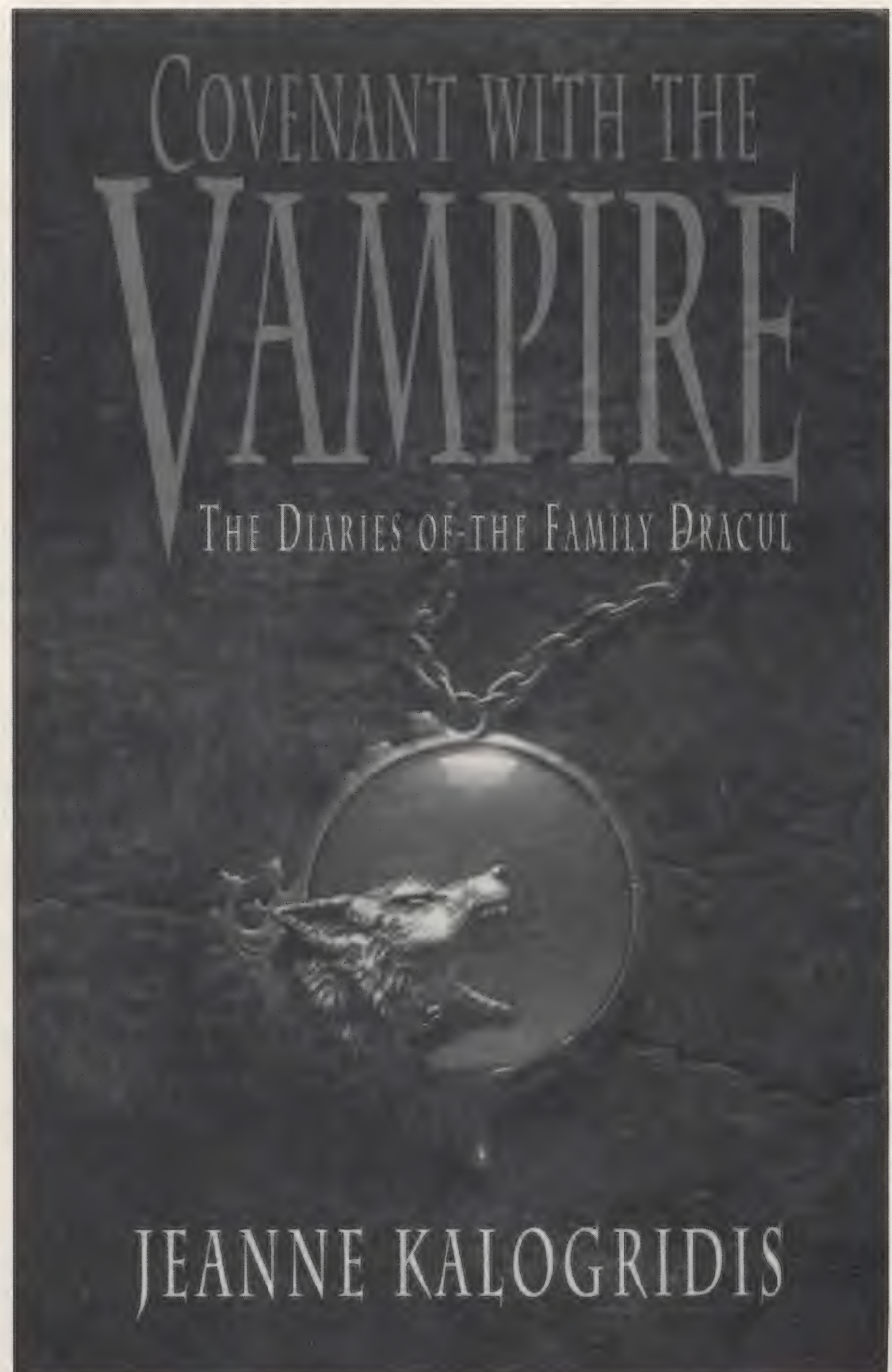
Well, for *that* kind of reader there's *The Vampyre: Being the True Pilgrimage of George Gordon, Sixth Lord Byron* by Tom Holland (Little Brown, £9.99), which takes the origins of its motifs very seriously. Scholars have long known, of course, that the origins of the literary vampire have nothing to do with the elaborate mid-European folklore detailed by Montague Summers and Paul Barber and everything to do with the fact that John Polidori carried a massive chip on his shoulder about his dismissal by Lord Byron.

Byron's other obsessive reject, Lady Caroline Lamb, had tried to get her own back by caricaturing Byron in a novel (*Glenarvon*); Polidori thought it a good enough wheeze to try himself, but could only manage a novelette called "The Vampyre." Ironically, the piece succeeded in spite of its own inadequacies, partly because it was mistakenly attributed to Byron and partly because Polidori succeeded in spite of himself in transplanting enough of Byron's charisma to his villain to infuse the charge that he was "a VAMPIRE" with an ambiguous allure that fuelled an entire subgenre of fiction. Tom Holland has developed this strange accident of fate into an intriguing tale which takes as its premise the proposition that Byron really was and still is the greatest vampire of them all.

The historical details of Holland's narrative are convincing; its telling is so constructed as

to maintain a keen cutting edge of suspense; and – perhaps most importantly of all – it actually tries to confront the logical corollaries of its premise. Although he does not answer the questions he poses, at least in this volume of what is presumably intended to be a series, Holland is prepared to look very closely at the idea of vampirism, and to begin unpacking it by wondering about its varieties and its origins as well as its moral and existential challenges. The tale – vivid and exciting though it is – does not run helter-skelter away from its own underlying assumptions; it is certainly horrific, but not in the pathetically scaredy-cat fashion which forbids the invocation of the intellect. For this reason, its sequels may actually have something sensible and interesting to say about the problem of evil. I, for one, shall be looking forward to them.

Brian Stableford



Tackling Chung Kuo

Chris Gilmore

As a sixth-former, having gained a university place but not yet left school, I read *War and Peace*. It took me a fortnight, during which I did very little else, and never before or since have I had the time to approach a big book in such a way. I mention this because I suspect that is the proper way to read David Wingrove's *Chung Kuo*; anyone who is contemplating a brief sojourn in jail could do a lot worse than to bring a set with him. I also suspect that most people who do so will, perforce, apply another, inferior approach much more like my own in this occasion. I read the first three volumes in fairly short order, followed by the fourth when it appeared, and the fifth and sixth together. The consideration that follows therefore relates not only to a work-in-progress, but to a serial reading. It's arguable that multi-volume works should not be reviewed until the last volume is out, but in this case especially, it would be most unfair to both the author and his publisher to hang fire. Books need to be noticed to be sold, and there's enough of this one to constitute at least a valid sample.

David Wingrove has been around for some time now, but his only major credits are *Trillion Year Spree* (with Brian Aldiss) and the *Science Fiction Source Book*. Now we have *Chung Kuo* – a heavily researched, densely written hard sf epic, originally scheduled for six volumes, since re-scheduled for eight and *already*, with the publication of *White Moon, Red Dragon* (Hodder and Stoughton, £16.99), running to nearly 3000 pages. The whole thing will be longer than *à la recherche*.

It's a panoramic, multi-viewpoint work rather than a *roman fleuve*, covering (so far) less than 30 years, but as this is long enough for the children of the first volume to have bred a new generation by the sixth, it now looks even more open-ended than it did when it began. It's based on the implausible but exciting premise of a world taken over by revitalized Confucianism. Chinese (now known as Han) dominate, in an overtly but not excessively racist fashion; many *Hung Mao* (Caucasians) are among the wealthiest in a society which sounds more benign than it is; like the fabled Latin American dictator who was unable to forgive his enemies because he had had them all shot, the Han have left themselves no bridges to build with the Japanese or the dark races – they've exterminated them, or so they think.

The background is the Han World State,

which reflects in true Spenglerian fashion the Han social paradigms. It's a modular world, divided sharply between agricultural and residential areas, the latter 300 levels high and moored from pillars. The top 290 contain all that is desirable in Han eyes – industry, security, the rule of law; the higher up you live, the better things are. The bottom ten are the domain of vice, spice, force and the Triads; beneath the lowest deck, in the Stygian darkness of the Clay, the ultimate outcasts, when not hacking each other for their own carrion, pick over the thrice-sifted garbage from Above.

But as *The Middle Kingdom* opens the 22nd century is drawing to a close, and tension is building up. The Han *Weltanschauung*, conservative to the point of timidity, regards stability and continuity as the highest social good. This weakness has led not only to stasis, but to society burdening itself with a wholly unnecessary Guilty Secret which must now be protected, and to a population problem rendered the more intractable by the strong family-feeling of the Han. The consequent physical and spiritual claustrophobia has in turn led to rampant sexual perversion in the male populace; boy-love (leading often enough to boy-murder) is rife, while even the straight generally regard a woman as up and running at 13.

The Han can put up with this for the sake of secure prosperity, but to a faction among the *Hung Mao*, ignorant or careless of the Secret, prosperity is not a substitute for living-space, only a convenient source of wealth to finance the further expansion of mankind throughout the Solar System and beyond – a concept hateful to the Han. Wingrove adds shock value by making one of his most attractive characters, Li Yuan, the crown prince and subsequently *Tang* (emperor) of Europe, a supporter not only of the stasis, but of a hideous project to "wire up" the skulls of the entire population with tracer/manipulators; whereas one of his most hateful characters, Howard De Vore, leads the Dispersionists.

Their conflict is played out as a bloody and Byzantine series of hi-tech intrigues among a well-differentiated set of characters, with varied sub-plots involving beast-men, murderous androids and a brain-hoaxing dingus I remember from Eric Frank Russell's *With a Strange Device*. Not all of these are equally convincing, incidentally; the androids in particular seem capable of far too much in a world where the problem of true organically

based artificial intelligence has yet to be solved satisfactorily; and as the chief researcher into that problem is already in communion with a purely mechanical AI, he seems to make unnecessarily heavy weather of it.

The story develops through the coming to manhood of three adolescent geniuses. Li Yuan is crown prince of Europe; Kim Ward is the unacknowledged bastard of a disgraced traitor, conceived during a slumming-bout in the Clay; Ben Shepherd is the culmination of a high-risk, high-return eugenic experiment. They grow towards maturity, aware of but unable to counter the overt and covert pressures placed upon them – somewhat as if the boyhood of Paul Atreides were presented in three alternative modes. Three heroes are not excessive for a book of this length, but there are rather too many minor viewpoint characters. As Wingrove jumps between them his principals can drop out of sight for literally hundreds of pages at a time, creating a jerky effect when they reappear.

Wingrove brings off the considerable feat of presenting youthful genius convincingly, but he's less successful with both his sex-writing and his heavies. To take the less important first, accounts of sympathetic characters engaged in passages of straight love (aka ultra-soft porn) are always boring – unless perchance you don't know how it's done, in which case you need a manual more than a novel. Contrariwise, accounts of perverted rape perpetrated by a villain, while permitting more variety, are a clumsy way of demonstrating his villainy – especially when they're thoroughly at odds with the rest of his character. It's as if Wingrove felt he had to use black propaganda against his own creations. This shows up most strongly with De Vore, represented as a middle-aged man of fanatic determination and iron self-discipline, who compromises himself through committing a cruel and unnecessary rape. Similarly, Wang Sau-Leyan, the obese and murderous *Tang* of Africa, behaves in a manner clearly modelled on Nero and Caligula, but shows no sign of the vanity that motivated them. Pure and universal malice is not a credible emotion in someone who, having reached the very top of the tree, has nothing to gain and everything to lose, even though he killed all his immediate family and other enemies to get there. He must therefore be regarded more as a madman

than a villain, with consequent loss of interest.

It is much worse when similar idiot plotting affects the principals. Li Yuan is a brilliant and serious-minded young man, striving to uphold with honour the Mandate which Heaven has thrust upon him, taking consolation in the rewards of that office, which include access to an endless series of beautiful young "maids." Nonetheless, he places it all in jeopardy for the sake of a woman whom he has not seen in ten years, and who betrayed him last time. This is only the most heinous example of Wingrove's habit of advancing the plot by way of some sort of sexual sottise, rather than letting it progress naturally through its inherent tensions, which are surely strong enough.

A similar failure of confidence occasionally invades the descriptive writing. Far too many items are described as "elegant," while the dialogue can lose its sense of occasion. Yuan, asking permission to wed, says to his father, "I already know what I want. *Who* I want." This might just be excusable, but later in the conversation he reiterates, "No, father, it's *her* I want." A brilliant and highly educated adolescent, asserting his manhood, doesn't lapse into baby-talk, here or in China. Likewise, having invested heavily in a frail boy-genius, to advance the plot by dropping him not once but twice into an environment where bullying can reach lethal levels smacks of carelessness.

Some of these observations might be countered in terms of the book's overarching concern, which is the commodification of human life, and the contempt in which it is held once it is perceived as trading at a discount. Wingrove is at his most ingenious when bringing this

out, both in terms of his primary symbol, which is the game of *wei chi* (more widely known in the western world as Go) and by making it implicit in action and explicit in speech. Consider these snatches of dialogue:

"*Revolutionaries...* there's a hollowness at the centre of them all when it comes right down to it. They're fucked up, and because *they're* fucked up, they want the world to be fucked up too ..."

"It's simple. The laws of the Market say that if a product's rare, its price is normally high. Likewise if it's commonplace - easily acquired, easily replaced - then its value is minimal. And right now I'd say life has never been cheaper, neh? The answer's a simple one. Too many bodies. Too many mouths to feed. The answer's obvious."

The speaker is a butterfly from the Han *Jeunesse dorée*, and his solution is to gas the entire lower class, some 32 billion souls. The horror of his suggestion lies not in its inhumanity, but in the accuracy of his analysis, and in its practicality. But distaste for humanity in general corrupts, since it modulates into self-distaste, as noted by a character visiting a low-level brothel.

He sat back. Even the smell of the place nauseated him. But that was hardly surprising: the air filters couldn't have been changed for thirty years. The air was recycled, yes, but that meant little here. He swallowed, keeping the bile from rising. How many times had each breath he took been breathed before? How many foul and cankered mouths had sighed their last, drug-soured breath into this putrid mix?

The same corruption affects all three of the male principals more and more strongly as they grow older. Li Yuan embarks on a

political marriage which he has no intention to consummate, regardless of the pride or the sexuality of his bride (who is plain, past her first youth and a virgin); Kim Ward creates a series of entities which have intelligence, self-awareness and emotions, but can in the nature of things have no prospect of a life, because they are merely intermediate steps in his research; Ben Shepherd rescues four men from the Clay, and proceeds, for reasons which have nothing to do with their own interests, to trifle with their memories, their sense of self and their affections.

It makes for a grim but satisfying read, the more effective because Wingrove refrains from moralizing, directly or through his characters. His vision is compelling, but the "message" of this novel is open to as many interpretations as it can win readers - for all its faults, may they be many, for it is the vision of a truly original mind.

It's a pity Hodder/NEL couldn't have provided Wingrove with an editor to polish the rough edges which remain, and which detract from the many strong passages in every department. Dialogue, description, narrative, ratiocination; Wingrove at his best handles all of these very well - even the sex writing can be good when he injects some credible emotion into it, as when a minor character has an encounter with a Clayborn waif not unlike Kim's mother. But there are still such sentences as "The approach to Lehmann's offices were like a rat-run," for which there can be no excuse, only apology. Yet there's far more to praise than to carp at in these books, which so far constitute three quarters (unless it's only half) of a first novel with a lot more than weight to commend it. I look forward with the keenest interest to the remaining two (three? more?) - watch this space!

Chris Gilmore

On Mars, Chung Kuo's largest colony is engulfed by civil war. In America a ruthless leader precipitates a disaster greater than Chung Kuo has ever known, while the Seven Han Lords dissipate their power fighting the shadows of their own great Ministry - The Thousand Eyes - in a struggle for ultimate political control.

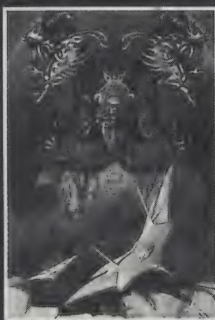
And in the heart of the City, in the final hours before the darkness falls, an old man - once the most powerful soldier in Chung Kuo - paces his rooms, the ghosts of the dead surrounding him. At last the magnificent edifice built by the Chinese conquerors has begun to crumble.

'Love, tragedy, joy and a sense of destiny being fulfilled - all human life (and death) is there ... Stands comparison with Asimov's *Foundation*'

Tom Hutchinson, *The Times*

'Imagine a collaboration between James Clavell and the late Frank Herbert'

San Francisco Chronicle



CHUNG KUO: there are now six volumes in David Wingrove's epic saga: 1. THE MIDDLE KINGDOM, 2. THE BROKEN WHEEL, 3. THE WHITE MOUNTAIN, 4. THE STONE WITHIN, 5. BENEATH THE TREE OF HEAVEN, 6. WHITE MOON, RED DRAGON

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BENEATH THE TREE OF HEAVEN

DAVID WINGROVE



Dr Who and Molly Brown

Paul Beardsley

Those anoraks among you (all right, among us) who can't wait for the release of Spielberg's *Doctor Who* would do well to check out two non-fiction titles from Virgin.

Doctor Who: The Seventies (Virgin, £15.99) is a big, attractive hardback with hundreds of colour photographs, covering the entire reign of Jon Pertwee, the third Doctor, and most of the reign of Tom Baker, the fourth. The text is roughly divided between biography, story precis, and behind-the-scenes, where we're occasionally treated to some profound insights into the creative process. For instance, did you know *Planet of the Spiders* was conceived as a Zen-Buddhist parable, with the giant spiders representing the ego? Obvious, really. Similar in approach, but smaller and without illustrations, is the paperback **The Handbook: The First Doctor** (Virgin, £4.99), covering William Hartnell's reign. A lengthy, in-depth chapter about production adds considerably to the book's interest. Both books were written by a trio of authors, David J. Howe, Mark Stammers and Stephen James Walker.

In an untelevised adventure, the first Doctor, together with his companions Ian and Barbara, travelled to the Venus of three billion years ago, when conditions there were sufficiently hospitable to support a dying civilization. The story is told in the "Missing Adventure" **Venusian Lullaby** by Paul Leonard (Virgin, £4.99). I had high hopes for this one because the author, whose real name is P. J. L. Hinder, has written some of the finest short stories to grace the small press in recent years, notably "The Problem with Jupiter" in *Exuberance* 5. However...

The blurb describes the Venusians as "utterly alien." Physically they resemble huge, five-legged egos – sorry, spiders – with five arms, eyes, mouths, etc. However, apart from maybe half a dozen alien characteristics, such as their bizarre funeral rites, the differences don't go much beyond appearance. That the book should so completely fail to come alive is due partly to the Venusians' ridiculous names. It's hard enough to pronounce Mrithijibu, Mrodtikdhil, Barjibuh, Inarihibi, Sesifghall or Gwebdhallut, let alone remember who's who. And there are *hundreds* of the buggers. In addition, one is expected

to learn italicized Venusian words such as *ghifghoni* – I eventually realized this means *pigeons*.

There's no real storyline; the three regulars are (sometimes literally) thrown from one arbitrary situation to another the moment the *Tardis* lands. They remain passive, or at best reactive, even when escaping from certain death. And seeing as how we know they're going to survive, we might at least be regaled with accounts of how they manage it. But no. "Don't question miracles," a Venusian tells Ian after he's survived the petrol forest. "They happen." Maybe, but not in good fiction. Recommendation: Paul Leonard read Bruce Sterling's "A Workshop Lexicon" (*Interzone* 39), and someone at Virgin be exterminated.

Of course, the beauty of a *Who* novel is the lack of budgetary constraint. Authors need not restrict themselves to a handful of locations, futile corridor chases, and the Doctor spouting pseudo-scientific bullshit while he saves the day by fiddling with machines. Unfortunately, nobody seems to have told Craig Hinton this.

His "Missing Adventure," **The Crystal Bucephalus** (Virgin, £4.99) features the fifth Doctor, Tegan, Turlough and Kamelion. The title refers to an exclusive "restaurant" in the distant future, whose clientele are projected back in time to eating places of their choice, fed, and returned to their present. (This has no effect on history, until things go wrong.) Unfortunately a particularly important client, the head of a galactic crime syndicate, has been murdered in 1960s Beswicks. Or has he? Whatever, the Doctor has to sort it out, with the help of Lassiter, the Bucephalus's founder. Meanwhile, there's a villain in a suit of invisibility who wants to take over the Bucephalus (and hence the universe). He's aided by Lassiter's ex-girlfriend Matisse, and opposed by Lassiter's ex-wife Monroe. The latter is a proponent of the Lazarus Intent, a sort of sci-fi analogue of Christianity – its followers are commanded to invent time travel and use it to rescue Lazarus moments before his martyrdom thousands of years ago. But all is not as it seems...

Character motivation is subordinate to

plot, the thoroughly unconvincing science is allowed to dominate, and there are too many cop-outs. Things begin to look interesting when the villain accidentally prevents the birth of the man who saved the Solar System from the Daleks – but a chapter later history is restored by someone pulling levers, so nothing exciting happens. Unless you're a *Who* everythingist, then, it's not worth the time or money. However, I *do* recommend reading pages 207-8 in the bookshop – they're sublimely awful.

Finally, a non-*Who* title. Molly Brown's first novel, **Virus** (Point SF, £2.99), was written for people in their early teens. It's set in 2078, in a well-realized Chicago after the neutron bomb. Life for the (mostly sterile) survivors is reasonably comfortable, if not exactly cosy – buildings are left standing, there's hardly any traffic, and the crime rate is low. Menial work is carried out by non-sentient robots, artificial intelligences having been destroyed in a jihad 19 years before. So technology is pretty much at present day levels when Amanda, the 18-year-old protagonist, starts work as a temp at Hawk Engineering. Steve, her colleague (and potential boyfriend), has had his curiosity aroused by the discovery of an old PC in the basement, in a box marked "Do Not Use." In the absence of a sign marked "Do Not Disregard Understated Warnings on Boxes," they use it – and unwittingly emulate Pandora.

It has to be said, originality is not the book's strongest point – there are obvious echoes of *Dune*, and Gibson's "New Rose Hotel," among others. Credibility is occasionally stretched a little, too, but these lapses are mollified (sorry) by the novel's sheer pace. The reader's curiosity is aroused as much as Steve's, with each satisfying revelation leading to further mystery. The result is a thoroughly readable thriller, especially recommended to young people who are (or should be) interested in computers, to the newcomer to sf (regardless of age), and to people who read to be entertained. On the strength of this, I eagerly await Molly Brown's promised historical novel, *Invitation to a Funeral*.

Paul Beardsley

Books Received

December 1994 – January 1995

The following is a list of all sf, fantasy and horror titles, and books of related interest, received by Interzone during the period specified above. Because there will be no listing next month (the Charles Platt-edited issue), we are splitting January's books received between this issue and the issue after next; what follows are books received up to approximately 15th January 1995. Official publication dates, where known, are given in italics at the end of each entry. Descriptive phrases in quotes following titles are taken from book covers rather than title pages. A listing here does not preclude a separate review in this issue (or in a future issue) of the magazine.

Adams, Bill, and Cecil Brooks. **The End of Fame.** "Del Rey Discovery." Del Rey, ISBN 0-345-37839-3, 308pp, A-format paperback, cover by Gregory Bridges, \$4.99. (Sf novel, first edition; second in a series about the adventures of interstellar playwright Evan Larkspur.) *1st December 1994.*

Alexander, David. **Star Trek Creator: The Authorized Biography of Gene Roddenberry.** Foreword by Ray Bradbury. Bantam, ISBN 0-7522-0873-X, xxii+599pp, hardcover, £15.99. (Biography of the sf television-series producer; first published in the USA, 1994.) *22nd December 1994.*

Anthony, Piers. **Geis of the Gargoyle.** Hodder & Stoughton, ISBN 0-450-60707-0, 290pp, hardcover, cover by Mick Posen, £16.99. (Fantasy novel, first edition; the latest in the "Xanth" series; in *Interzone 91* we erroneously listed the US Tor edition as the first, but in fact this UK edition preceded it.) *Late entry: 17th November publication, received in December 1994.*

Asimov, Isaac. **The Complete Stories: Volume Two.** HarperCollins, ISBN 0-00-648016-0, 464pp, A-format paperback, £5.99. (Sf collection, first published in the USA, 1992.) *9th January 1995.*

Banks, Iain M. **Against a Dark Background.** Orbit, ISBN 1-85723-179-1, 487pp, B-format paperback, £6.99. (Sf novel, first published in 1993; reviewed by John Clute in *Interzone 73*.) *12th January 1995.*

Baudino, Gael. **Maze of Moonlight.** "The compelling and magical fantasy series... Book Two." Orbit, ISBN 1-85723-268-2, 351pp, A-format paperback, cover by David O'Connor, £5.99. (Fantasy novel, first published in the USA, 1993; reviewed by Brian Stableford in *Interzone 91*.) *8th December 1994.*

Baudino, Gael. **Shroud of Shadow.** "The compelling and magical fantasy series... Book Three." Orbit, ISBN 1-85723-269-0, 352pp, A-format paperback, cover by David O'Connor, £5.99. (Fantasy novel, first published in the USA, 1993; reviewed by Brian Stableford in

Interzone 91.) *8th December 1994.*

Baudino, Gael. **Strands of Starlight.** "The compelling and magical fantasy series... Book One." Orbit, ISBN 1-85723-264-X, 371pp, A-format paperback, cover by David O'Connor, £5.99. (Fantasy novel, first published in the USA, 1989; reviewed by Brian Stableford in *Interzone 91*; oddly, this book and its two sequels [see the above entries] are proclaimed as a series and yet we're given no hint of an overall series title; presumably, they are just the "Strands of Starlight" series; see the interview with Gael Baudino which we published in *IZ 90*.) *8th December 1994.*

Boyer, Elizabeth H. **Keeper of Cats.** Del Rey, ISBN 0-345-38180-7, 356pp, A-format paperback, cover by Mark Garro, \$5.99. (Fantasy novel, first edition.) *1st January 1995.*

Bradley, Marion Zimmer. **Lady of the Trillium.** Bantam/Spectra, ISBN 0-553-09299-5, 291pp, hardcover, \$22.95. (Fantasy novel, first edition; proof copy received; fourth in the "Trillium" series, other parts of which have been written by Julian May and Andre Norton; this volume seems to have been co-authored by one Elisabeth Waters ["my cousin and secretary," according to Bradley], though Waters's name does not appear on the title page.) *15th March 1995.*

Carver, Jeffrey A. **Strange Attractors: The Chaos Chronicles, Volume Two.** Tor, ISBN 0-312-85641-5, 351pp, hardcover, \$22.95. (Sf novel, first edition; proof copy received.) *March 1995.*

Chetwynd-Hayes, R. **Hell is What You Make It.** Hale, ISBN 0-7090-5535-8, 160pp, hardcover, cover by Barbara Walton, £15.99. (Horror novel, first edition.) *30th December 1994.*

Cross, Ronald Anthony. **The Lost Guardian: Book Two of The Eternal Guardians.** Tor, ISBN 0-312-85862-0, 413pp, hardcover, \$22.95. (Fantasy novel, first edition; proof copy received.) *April 1995.*

Crossley, Robert. **Olaf Stapledon: Speaking for the Future.** Foreword by Brian W. Aldiss. Liverpool University Press, ISBN 0-85323-388-8, xviii+474pp, hardcover, £32.50. (Biography of the great sf writer [who happened to be a Liverpoolian!]; first published in the USA, 1994; this is the premier volume to appear in a very promising academic series entitled "Liverpool Science Fiction Texts and Studies," published in association with the Science Fiction Foundation — which Liverpool University now houses along with the Stapledon papers.) *Late entry: November (?) publication (it says "September" on the review slip but we don't believe them), received in*

December 1994.

Curry, Chris. **Panic.** Hodder & Stoughton, ISBN 0-340-62897-9, 370pp, hardcover, £16.99. (Horror novel, first published in the USA, 1994; Chris Curry is an American woman writer previously unknown to us; Ramsey Campbell commends her for being "as inventive with sexual corruption and Gothic melodrama as with the supernatural.") *5th January 1995.*

De Lint, Charles. **The Ivory and the Horn: A Newford Collection.** Tor, ISBN 0-312-85573-7, 318pp, hardcover, \$21.95. (Fantasy collection, first edition; proof copy received; four of these tales, "Mr Truepenny's Book Emporium and Gallery," "The Wishing Well," "The Bone Woman" and "Coyote Stories," first appeared as chapbooks; the rest are from recent anthologies or magazines, plus one, "Bird Bones and Wood Ash," original to this collection.) *April 1995.*

Donawerth, Jane L., and Carol A. Kolmerten, eds. **Utopian and Science Fiction by Women: Worlds of Difference.** "Liverpool Science Fiction Texts and Studies." Foreword by Susan Gubar. Liverpool University Press, ISBN 0-85323-279-2, xix+260pp, trade paperback, £15. (Collection of essays on women's sf, first published in the USA, 1994; there is a simultaneous hardcover edition [not seen]; apart from Britain's Sarah Lefanu, the dozen contributors all have unfamiliar names and are American academics — "professors," every one of them! [professorships seem to be two-a-penny in the States, but actually the word has taken on a devalued meaning over there and more or less corresponds to our "lecturer"]; subjects include Margaret Cavendish [*The Blazing World*, 1666], Mme. d'Aulnoy, Mrs Gaskell, Charlotte Perkins Gilman, early women pulp writers, Naomi Mitchison, Octavia Butler, etc; the faintly irritating title is meant to indicate that the book covers both utopian and sf writings, as though these are distinct subjects; nevertheless, a useful volume; this book was billed as third in the Liverpool series, but the second, David Seed's *Anticipations: Essays on Early SF*, seems not to have appeared as yet.) *Late entry: November (?) publication (it says "October" on the review slip but we don't believe them), received in December 1994.*

Douglas, John. **The Late Show.** Hodder & Stoughton, ISBN 0-340-63234-8, 216pp, hardcover, cover by Steve Crisp, £16.99. (Horror novel, first edition; a debut book by a new British author, born 1955 [he's not John Douglas the American sf/fantasy editor].) *8th December 1994.*

Forward, Eve L. **Villains by Necessity.** Tor, ISBN 0-312-85789-6, 445pp, hardcover,

\$24.95. (Fantasy novel, first edition; proof copy received; a debut book by the daughter of scientist-author Robert L. Forward.) *March 1995.*

Foster, Alan Dean. **Greenthieves.** Orbit, ISBN 1-85723-216-X, 248pp, A-format paperback, cover by Stephen Bradbury, £4.99. (Humorous sf novel, first published in the USA, 1994.) *8th December 1994.*

Frank, Janrae, Jean Stine and Forrest J. Ackerman, eds. **New Eves: Science Fiction About the Extraordinary Women of Today and Tomorrow.** Longmeadow Press [201 High Ridge Rd., Stamford, CT 06904, USA], ISBN 0-681-00525-4, xvi+427pp, \$14.95. (Sf anthology, first edition; there have been many collections of sf by and about women, but the interest in this historically-oriented volume is that it resurrounds older material from the pulp magazines, beginning with Francis Stevens's "Friend Island" [*All-Story Weekly*, 1918]; other contributors include Leslie F. Stone, Helen Weinbaum, Leslie Perri, Leigh Brackett, Margaret St Clair, Miriam Allen deFord, Andre Norton, Zenna Henderson, Judith Merrill, Evelyn E. Smith, and so on through to the recent Nancy Kress, Karen Joy Fowler and Maureen F. McHugh.) *January 1995.*

Gideon, John. **Red Ball.** Headline, ISBN 0-7472-4562-2, 599pp, A-format paperback, £5.99. (Horror novel, first published in the USA [?], 1994; "John Gideon" is a pseudonym for Lonn Hoklin.) *19th January 1995.*

Gorman, Ed. **Blood Red Moon.** Headline, ISBN 0-7472-4597-5, 372pp, A-format paperback, cover by Lee Gibbons, £4.99. (Horror/suspense novel, first published in 1994; reviewed by James Lovegrove in *Interzone* 90.) *12th January 1995.*

Gorman, Ed. **Cold Blue Midnight.** Headline, ISBN 0-7472-1141-8, 282pp, hardcover, cover by Lee Gibbons, £16.99. (Horror/suspense novel, first published in the USA [?], 1995.) *12th January 1995.*

Hambly, Barbara. **Bride of the Rat God.** Del Rey, ISBN 0-345-38101-7, 336pp, A-format paperback, cover by Robert Rodriguez, \$5.99. (Fantasy novel, first edition; it's set in 1920s Hollywood and involves a silent-movie star and an ancient Chinese curse.) *1st December 1994.*

Harman, Andrew. **101 Damns.** Legend, ISBN 0-09-949881-2, 293pp, A-format paperback, cover by Mick Posen, £4.99. (Humorous fantasy novel, first edition; the author's fourth book in two years.) *19th January 1995.*

Harrison, Harry. **The Stainless Steel Rat Sings the Blues.** Bantam, ISBN 0-553-40501-2, 230pp, A-format paperback, £4.99. (Sf novel, first published in 1994; the eighth novel in a series which began in 1961.) *9th February 1995.*

Harrison, Harry, and John Holm. **One King's**

Way. "The Hammer and the Cross, Book Two." Tor, ISBN 0-312-85691-1, 399pp, hardcover, \$23.95. (Alternative-world sf novel, first published in the UK, 1995; proof copy received; we haven't seen the British edition yet, but believe it's due out before this one; "John Holm" is a pseudonym of Professor Tom Shippey.) *April 1995.*

Haynes, Gary. **Carrion.** Warner, ISBN 0-7515-0898-5, 406pp, A-format paperback, cover by J. K. Potter, £5.99. (Horror novel, first edition [?]; we're told absolutely nothing about the author, but the book has a British feel and it may well be a debut novel.) *12th January 1995.*

Hogan, James P. **Realtime Interrupt.** Bantam/Spectra, ISBN 0-553-37454-0, 326pp, trade paperback, \$12.95. (Sf novel, first edition; proof copy received; it's described as "a breathtaking technological thriller.") *15th February 1995.*

Holder, Nancy, and Melanie Tem. **Making Love.** Raven, ISBN 1-85487-345-8, 368pp, A-format paperback, £4.99. (Horror novel, first published in the USA, 1993.) *23rd January 1995.*

Holt, Tom. **Faust Among Equals.** Orbit, ISBN 1-85723-265-8, 292pp, A-format paperback, cover by Steve Lee, £4.99. (Humorous fantasy novel, first published in 1994; reviewed by John Clute in *Interzone* 85.) *19th January 1995.*

Hoppenstand, Gary. **Clive Barker's Short Stories: Imagination as Metaphor in the Books of Blood and Other Works.** Foreword by Clive Barker. McFarland, [distributed in Britain by Shelwing Ltd, 4 Pleydell Gdns., Folkestone, Kent CT20 2DN], ISBN 0-89950-984-3, vii+223pp, hardcover, £32.50. (Critical study of a major British horror-fiction author; first published in the USA, 1994; the second study of Barker we've seen recently [Suzanne J. Barbieri's chapbook *Clive Barker: Mythmaker for the Millennium* was the other], this is much the more substantial and looks to be well-written and intelligent; recommended to all those with a strong interest in Barker; this is the US edition with a British price added.) *24th January 1995.*

Jacques, Brian. **Mariel of Redwall.** Illustrated by Gary Chalk. Legend, ISBN 0-09-931941-1, 387pp, A-format paperback, cover by John Barber, £4.99. (Animal fantasy novel, first published in 1991; sequel to *Mattimeo*, and fourth in the series which began with *Redwall*.) *19th January 1995.*

Jacques, Brian. **Mattimeo.** Illustrated by Gary Chalk. Legend, ISBN 0-09-931931-4, 446pp, A-format paperback, cover by John Barber, £4.99. (Animal fantasy novel, first published in 1989; third in the series.) *19th January 1995.*

James, Edward. **Science Fiction in the Twentieth Century.** Oxford University Press/Opus, ISBN 0-19-289244-4, xiv+250pp, B-format paperback, cover by Robert McCall,

£7.99. (Brief history and critical survey of the sf field; first edition; a nice, smoothly-written, well-informed little book by the editor of the critical journal *Foundation*; recommended.) *Late entry: October (?) publication, received in December 1994.*

Jones, Stephen, and Ramsey Campbell, eds. **The Best New Horror: Volume Five.** Carroll & Graf, ISBN 0-7867-0155-2, x+514pp, B-format paperback, cover by Luis Rey, \$9.95. (Horror anthology, first published in the UK, 1994; it contains reprint stories by Poppy Z. Brite, Edward Bryant, Harlan Ellison, Christopher Fowler, Elizabeth Hand, Kathe Koja, Thomas Ligotti, Kim Newman, Nicholas Royle, Michael Marshall Smith, S. P. Somtow, Thomas Tessier, Karl Edward Wagner and others.) *January 1995.*

Ketchum, Jack. **Only Child.** Headline, ISBN 0-7472-1167-1, 248pp, hardcover, cover by Larry Rostant, £16.99. (Horror/suspense novel, first edition [?]; "Jack Ketchum" is a pseudonym for Dallas Mayr.) *12th January 1995.*

Ketchum, Jack. **Road Kill.** Headline, ISBN 0-7472-4540-1, 245pp, A-format paperback, cover by Larry Rostant, £4.99. (Horror/suspense novel, first published in the USA, 1994.) *19th January 1995.*

Koontz, Dean. **Icebound.** Headline, ISBN 0-7472-4740-4, 376pp, A-format paperback, cover by Chris Moore, £4.99. (Sf/suspense novel, first published in the USA as *Prison of Ice*, under the pseudonym "David Axton," 1976; this edition is revised and contains a new two-page afterword by the author in which he admits that "this is the only book of its type I've written" and that it is intended as a homage to Alistair MacLean.) *12th January 1995.*

Little, Bentley. **Evil Deeds.** Headline, ISBN 0-7472-4254-2, 436pp, A-format paperback, cover by Simon Dewey, £5.99. (Horror novel, first published in the USA as *Death Instinct* by "Phillip Emmons," 1992.) *19th January 1995.*

Lumley, Brian. **The Second Wish and Other Exhalations.** New English Library, ISBN 0-340-62300-4, 350pp, A-format paperback, cover by Les Edwards, £4.99. (Horror collection, first edition; the author's third career-spanning volume, following *Fruiting Bodies* and *Dagon's Bell*.) *19th January 1995.*

McCaffrey, Anne. **Lyon's Pride.** "Volume 4 in her Bestselling *Tower and the Hive* series." Corgi, ISBN 0-552-13914-9, 347pp, A-format paperback, £4.99. (Sf novel, first published in the USA, 1994; sequel to *The Rowan, Damia* and *Damia's Children*; these books now have a series title which they didn't have before.) *9th February 1995.*

McCarty, John, ed. **The Sleaze Merchants: Adventures in Exploitation Filmmaking.** St Martin's Press, ISBN 0-312-11893-7, 219pp, trade paperback, \$16.95. (Illustrated history/criticism of cheapo horror/porn flicks; first edition; proof copy received; the funny accompanying letter from editor Gordon Van

Gelder contains the following cod blurb: "Never before in the history of publishing has there been such an event! Bountiful beauteous babes! More movies than ever discussed in one book before! The genius of Ed Wood! The hideous world of Jess Franco! Lustful Turks! Nudists! Bikers! Bottom-line accountants! Bountiful beauteous babes! And much much more!"; a pity they didn't use that on the book.) *March 1995.*

McGrane, John. **Ansylke**. Pentland Press [1 Hutton Close, South Church, Bishop Auckland, Durham DL14 6XB], ISBN 1-85821-197-2, 203pp, hardcover, cover by Geoff Hobbs, £14.50. (Fantasy novel, first edition; the author is remarkably honest when he states in the back-flap blurb: "More is to come when silver can turn the presses again" — this does indeed appear to be a vanity-press product.) *12th December 1994.*

McHugh, Maureen F. **China Mountain Zhang**. Orbit, ISBN 1-85723-270-4, 314pp, B-format paperback, £5.99. (Sf novel, first published in the USA, 1992; the debut novel by one of the most praised new American sf writers of recent years, available in Britain at last; winner of the Tiptree Memorial Award and nominee for numerous other prizes; reviewed by Ken Brown, fairly glowingly, in *Interzone* 64.) *12th January 1995.*

Maginn, Simon. **Virgins and Martyrs**. Corgi, ISBN 0-552-14249-2, 317pp, A-format paperback, cover by Jason Horley, £4.99. (Horror novel, first edition; a second novel by this new British writer.) *9th February 1995.*

Moorcock, Michael. **Blood: A Southern Fantasy**. Millennium, ISBN 1-85798-233-9, 248pp, C-format paperback, £9.99. (Sf/fantasy novel, first edition; there is a simultaneous hardcover edition [not seen]; segments of this book first appeared in David Garnett's anthology series *New Worlds*; reviewed, from an advance proof, by Dave Kendall in *Interzone* 92.) *26th January 1995.*

Morris, Kenneth. **The Dragon Path: Collected Tales of Kenneth Morris**. Edited by Douglas A. Anderson. Tor, ISBN 0-312-85309-2, 382pp, hardcover, \$23.95. (Fantasy collection, first edition; ten stories, comprising perhaps a third of this book, were first published as *The Secret Mountain and Other Tales*, 1926; proof copy received; the author, a British "Theosophist" who spent much of his life in America, and whose Welsh-flavoured fantasy novels such as *Book of the Three Dragons* [1930] have been praised by Ursula Le Guin and others, died in 1937; editor Anderson has done a splendid job in retrieving and introducing these forgotten but significant fantasy writings.) *March 1995.*

Nicolazzini, Piergiorgio, ed. **Cyberpunk**. Editrice Nord [Milan, Italy], ISBN 88-429-0798-7, xlii+696pp, hardcover, cover by Michael Whelan, 35,000 lire. (Sf anthology, first edition; a truly bumper collection of English-language stories in a cyberpunk vein, here translated into Italian; contributors include Iain Banks, Greg Bear, Michael

Blumlein, Pat Cadigan, Richard Calder, Storm Constantine, Paul Di Filippo, Greg Egan, the inevitable William Gibson, Richard Kadrey, Paul J. McAuley, Ian McDonald, Lisa Mason, Rudy Rucker, Bruce Sterling, Michael Swanwick, etc. etc.; a number of the stories first appeared in *Interzone*; there are introductions by the editor and US critic Larry McCaffery, and a good set of bibliographies; nothing as thorough as this has appeared in English, to our knowledge.) *Late entry: November publication, received in December 1994.*

Pike, Christopher. **The Cold One**. Hodder & Stoughton, ISBN 0-450-61357-7, 314pp, hardcover, £16.99. (Horror novel, first edition [?]; Christopher Pike, man of mystery [i.e. his real name has not been divulged], is one of America's best-selling horror writers on the basis of his juvenile books; he seems now to have turned decisively to adult fiction; by the way, we learn from one of the "Star Trek" books listed below that "Christopher Pike" was the name of the first commander of the starship *Enterprise*, that is, the character played by Jeffrey Hunter who preceded William Shatner's Captain Kirk in the pilot episode, "The Cage.") *19th January 1995.*

Potocki, Jan. **The Manuscript Found in Saragossa**. Translated by Ian Maclean. Viking, ISBN 0-670-83428-9, xxiv+631pp, hardcover, £16. (Horror/fantasy novel, first published in this form in France, 1989; the author, 1761-1815, was an eccentric Polish aristocrat who wrote in French and left this lengthy work in manuscript at the time of his suicide [though parts had been published in 1813-14]; usually known in English as *The Saragossa Manuscript*, it consists of a vast complex of interweaving fantastic narratives; a slim, partial version of an earlier translation was published in the UK by Dedalus a few years ago, but this is the first complete English edition.) *26th January 1995.*

Pringle, David. **The Ultimate Guide to Science Fiction: An A-Z of Science-Fiction Books by Title**. 2nd edition. Scholar Press, ISBN 1-85928-071-4, xix+481pp, hardcover, £35. (Reference guide to sf; the first edition appeared in 1990; this new edition is 80 pages longer than the first, containing some 40,000 words of new entries plus revisions to the old; for the first time, an attempt has been made to cover all sf movie novelizations as well as other sf novels, collections and anthologies.) *16th February 1995.*

Rawn, Melanie. **The Dragon Token: Dragon Star, Book Two**. Pan, ISBN 0-330-32898-0, xii+ 574pp, A-format paperback, cover by Michael Whelan, £5.99. (Fantasy novel, first published in the USA, 1992; reviewed by Wendy Bradley in *Interzone* 61.) *13th January 1995.*

Rawn, Melanie. **Skybowl**. "Dragon Star: Book Three." Macmillan, ISBN 0-333-62819-5, xii+672pp, hardcover, cover by Michael Whelan, £15.99. (Fantasy novel, first published in the USA, 1993.) *13th January 1995.*

Richards, Tony. **Night Feast**. Pan, ISBN 0-330-33310-0, 537pp, A-format paperback, cover by George Underwood, £5.99. (Horror novel, first edition; a second novel by this British writer whose first, *The Harvest Bride*, appeared some years ago.) *13th January 1995.*

Ripley, Karen. **The Alchemist of Time: Book Three of The Slow World**. Del Rey, ISBN 0-345-38118-1, 470pp, A-format paperback, cover by Nicholas Jainschigg, \$4.99. (Sf novel, first edition; we have not heard of this author before now, but this is her fifth novel.) *1st December 1994.*

Robinson, Kim Stanley. **The Wild Shore**. HarperCollins, ISBN 0-00-648019-5, 343pp, A-format paperback, £4.99. (Sf novel, first published in the USA, 1984; Robinson's debut novel, and the first in what has come to be known as his "Orange County" trilogy.) *9th January 1995.*

Rosenblum, Mary. **The Stone Garden**. Del Rey, ISBN 0-345-38958-1, 359pp, A-format paperback, cover by Bruce Jensen, \$4.99. (Sf novel, first edition; this is the first book we've seen by a new American author who is gaining praise; her first two were entitled *The Drylands* and *Chimera*.) *1st January 1995.*

Sawyer, Robert J. **Far-Seeker: The Quintaglio Ascension, 1**. New English Library, ISBN 0-340-61802-7, 257pp, A-format paperback, cover by Mick Posen, £4.99. (Sf novel, first published in the USA, 1992.) *19th January 1995.*

Schelde, Per. **Androids, Humanoids, and Other Science Fiction Monsters: Science and Soul in Science Fiction Films**. New York University Press [distributed in the UK by Eurospan, 3 Henrietta St., London WC2E 8LU], ISBN 0-8147-7995-6, ix+279pp, trade paperback, £15.95. (Critical study of sf cinema; first published in the USA, 1993; there is a simultaneous hardcover edition [not seen]; the author, an anthropologist and folklorist, makes much of the fact that his is "the first book-length study of sf movies that is not a picture book or a picture-book history," thus ignoring the existence of [or, more likely, betraying his ignorance of] such important academic studies as Vivian Sobchack's *Screening Space: The American Science Fiction Film* [Ungar, 1987].) *Late entry: September publication, received in December 1994.*

Silva, David B. **The Presence**. Headline, ISBN 0-7472-4582-7, 472pp, A-format paperback, cover by Bob Corley, £5.99. (Horror novel, first published in the USA [?], 1994.) *19th January 1995.*

Silverberg, Robert. **The Collected Stories of Robert Silverberg, Volume Three: Beyond the Safe Zone**. HarperCollins, ISBN 0-586-21371-6, 605pp, B-format paperback, £6.99. (Sf collection, first published in the USA as *Beyond the Safe Zone: Collected Stories of Robert Silverberg*, 1986; this contains the best

of Silverberg's short fiction from the first half of the 1970s, and includes the bulk of the contents of such earlier volumes as *The Feast of St Dionysus* [1975] and *Capricorn Games* [1976]; it first appeared in America, without the author's introductions which seem to be new to this edition, as a 1986 Donald I. Fine small-press hardcover; we're pleased to see it, but whatever became of the second volume in this excellent set? — according to an advert in the back of this book, it was called *The Collected Stories of Robert Silverberg, Volume Two: The Secret Sharer* and must have appeared about a year ago, but HarperCollins neglected to send us it for review.) *23rd January 1995.*

Silverberg, Robert. **The Mountains of Majipoor.** Bantam/Spectra, ISBN 0-553-09614-1, 225pp, hardcover, \$19.95. (Sf/fantasy novel, first edition; proof copy received; Silverberg's first return to Majipoor in over a decade, it's a small thing — really little more than a novella.) *15th February 1995.*

Stableford, Brian. **The Carnival of Destruction.** Pocket, ISBN unknown, pagination unknown, A-format paperback, price unknown. (Metaphysical sf novel, first edition; third in the trilogy which began with *The Werewolves of London* and *The Angel of Pain*; we are disgruntled about this, not so much because *Interzone* was not sent a review copy but because the publishers, Simon & Schuster, have put this important title straight into "mass-market" paperback, presumably in a very small printing, and appear not to have sent out any review copies at all [even the author had received no copies when we last spoke to him]; they seem to be trying to "suppress" the book, though a few copies have been sighted in bookshops; readers who have the Simon & Schuster hardcover editions of the first two volumes should buy the nicely-produced [and well-publicized!] Carroll & Graf hardcover of this

one from America, via sf specialist shops or mail-order dealers.) *Late entry: November (?) 1994 publication, not received.*

Stasheff, Christopher. **The Witch Doctor: Book III of A Wizard in Rhyme.** Del Rey, ISBN 0-345-38851-8, 410pp, A-format paperback, cover by Darrell K. Sweet, \$5.99. (Fantasy novel, first published in the USA, 1994.) *1st January 1995.*

Sturgeon, Theodore. **The Ultimate Egoist: The Complete Stories of Theodore Sturgeon, Volume I.** Edited by Paul Williams. Forewords by Ray Bradbury, Arthur C. Clarke and Gene Wolfe. North Atlantic Books [PO Box 12327, Berkeley, CA 94712, USA], ISBN 1-55643-182-1, xvi+389pp, hardcover, cover by Jacek Yerka, \$25. (Sf/fantasy collection, first edition; now here is a labour of love: nearly ten years after Sturgeon's death, Williams has gathered together all of his stories, published and unpublished, arranged them in chronological order with notes, and will be publishing them over the next few years in a series which may stretch to eight volumes or more; this first volume contains stories written between 1937, when Sturgeon was 19, and early 1940; among the better-known pieces are "Ether Breather," "Bianca's Hands" and "It"; but the main interest of the volume resides in the 43 other stories, many of them never before collected, some of them never published but found among the author's papers after his death; a must-buy for all Sturgeon enthusiasts.) *Late entry: November 1994 publication, received in January 1995.*

Taylor, Roger. **Whistler.** Headline, ISBN 0-7472-4595-9, 570pp, A-format paperback, cover by Mark Harrison, £5.99. (Fantasy novel, first published in the 1994.) *12th January 1995.*

Watt-Evans, Lawrence. **Out of This World.** Del Rey, ISBN 0-345-39114-4, 394pp, A-format

paperback, cover by Peter Peebles, \$5.99. (Sf novel, first published in the USA, 1994.) *1st December 1994.*

Whitbourn, John. **To Build Jerusalem.** Gollancz, ISBN 0-575-05871-4, 311pp, hardcover, £15.99. (Fantasy novel, first edition; proof copy received; there will be a simultaneous paperback edition [not seen].) *13th April 1995.*

Wilson, Robert Charles. **Mysterium.** New English Library, ISBN 0-450-60959-6, 345pp, A-format paperback, cover by Fred Gambino, £4.99. (Sf novel, first published in the USA, 1994.) *19th January 1995.*

Winding, Terri, ed. **The Armless Maiden and Other Tales for Childhood's Survivors.** Tor, ISBN 0-312-85234-7, 382pp, hardcover, \$22.95. (Fantasy anthology, first edition; proof copy received; a mix of original and reprint fairy tales and verse about "childhood and its darker passages"; among the contributors of new material are Emma Bull, Kara Dalkey, Steven Gould, Tappan King, Ellen Kushner, Tanith Lee, Patricia A. McKillip, Susan Palwick, Delia Sherman, Midori Snyder and, as ever, Jane Yolen; there are also a few essays, including a painfully confessional afterword, "Surviving Childhood," by editor Winding; this was obviously a deeply felt project.) *April 1995.*

Zelazny, Roger, and Robert Sheckley. **A Farce to be Reckoned With.** Bantam/Spectra, ISBN 0-553-37442-7, 292pp, trade paperback, \$12.95. (Humorous fantasy novel, first edition; proof copy received; latest in the "Azzie Elbub" series which began with *Bring Me the Head of Prince Charming*.) *April 1995.*

Zell, Steve. **Wizrd.** Headline, ISBN 0-7472-4609-2, 440pp, A-format paperback, cover by Steve Crisp, £5.99. (Horror novel, first published in the USA, 1994.) *19th January 1995.*

SPINOFFERY

This is a list of all books received which fall into those sub-types of sf, fantasy and horror which may be termed novelizations, recursive fictions, spinoffs, sequels by other hands, shared worlds and sharecrops (including non-fiction about shared worlds, films and TV, etc.). The collective term "Spinoffery" is used for the sake of brevity.

Allen, Roger MacBride. **Ambush at Corellia: Book One of the Corellian Trilogy.** "Star Wars." Bantam/Spectra, ISBN 0-553-29803-8, viii+308pp, A-format paperback, cover by Drew Struzan, \$5.99. (Sf movie spinoff novel, first edition; proof copy received.) *March 1995.*

Bailey, Hilary. **Frankenstein's Bride.** "The sequel to Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*." Simon & Schuster, ISBN 0-671-71917-3, viii+248pp, hardcover, cover by Tim Dry, £12.99. (Sequel

by another hand, first edition; this looks interesting: it's a "straight" sequel to *Frankenstein* [unlike, say, Brian Aldiss's *Frankenstein Unbound*, which played tricks with time], no doubt hoping to ride the bandwagon of recent bestselling sequels-by-other-hands perpetrated by the likes of Susan Hill and Emma Tennant; of course, Hilary Bailey [the ex-Mrs Moorcock] has written a good deal of sf before now [including one of Michael Moorcock's, *The Black Corridor*], as well as many other books such as the amusing *Hannie Richards*, a feminist spoof of Buchan's "Richard Hannay" novels, and *The Strange Adventures of Charlotte Holmes*, whose title speaks for itself; her Jack the Ripper novel, *The Cry from Street to Street*, appeared about four years ago.) *12th January 1995.*

Dillard, J. M. **"Where No One Has Gone Before": A History in Pictures.** "Star Trek." Introduction by William Shatner. Simon & Schuster, ISBN 0-671-51149-1, xii+206pp, hardcover, £25. (Large-format illustrated history of the Star Trek phenomenon; first published in the USA, 1994; this is the

American, Pocket Books, first edition with a British price added.) *3rd January 1995.*

Ramsland, Katherine. **The Anne Rice Trivia Book.** "For devoted fans of her dark fictional world, 1,000 questions to test your unearthly knowledge!" Ballantine, ISBN 0-345-39251-5, x+244pp, A-format paperback, \$5.99. (Quiz book devoted to a leading American horror writer, first edition; Dr Ramsland seems to be making quite a cottage industry out of Anne Rice; this is her fourth book about her favourite writer; she also contributed an interview with Rice to our late sister magazine, *Million*.) *1st December 1994.*

Reeves-Stevens, Judith and Garfield. **Federation.** "Star Trek." Simon & Schuster, ISBN 0-671-89422-6, viii+467pp, hardcover, cover by Keith Birdsong, £9.99. (Sf TV-series spinoff novel, first published in the USA, 1994; it appears to be the biggest Star Trek novel to date, billed as "an epic story that spans the generations"; this is the American, Pocket Books, first edition with a British price added.) *3rd January 1995.*

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Charles Platt joins us as guest editor! He has gathered a fine crop of new stories by Piers Anthony, Gregory Benford, Michael Blumlein, Kathleen Ann Goonan, Richard Kadrey, Rudy Rucker and others, making this very nearly an all-fiction, all-American, all-star issue (entirely designed and typeset by Charles, as well). So look out for something special in the shape of the April *Interzone*, on sale in March.

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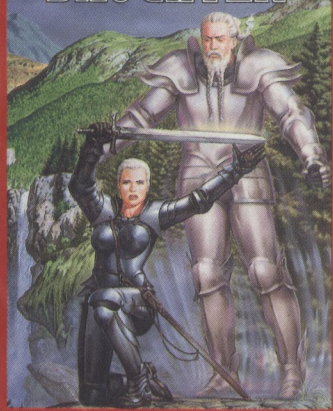
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